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Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963

Volume I

Vietnam 1961

Editor in Chief John P. Glennon

Editors Ronald D. Landa

Charles S. Sampson

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Preface

The publication *Foreign Relations of the United States* constitutes the official record of the foreign policy of the United States. The volumes in the series include, subject to necessary security considerations, all documents needed to give a comprehensive record of the major foreign policy decisions of the United States together with appropriate materials concerning the facts that contributed to the formulation of policies. Documents in the files of the Department of State are supplemented by papers from other government agencies involved in the formulation of foreign policy.

The basic documentary diplomatic record printed in the volumes of the series *Foreign Relations of the United States* is edited by the Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State. The editing is guided by the principles of historical objectivity and in accordance with the following official guidance first promulgated by Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg on March 26, 1925:

There may be no alteration of the text, no deletions without indicating where in the text the deletion is made, and no omission of facts which were of major importance in reaching a decision. Nothing may be omitted for the purpose of concealing or glossing over what might be regarded by some as a defect of policy. However, certain omissions of documents are permissible for the following reasons:

a. To avoid publication of matters which would tend to impede current diplomatic negotiations or other business.

b. To condense the record and avoid repetition of needless details.

c. To preserve the confidence reposed in the Department by individuals and by foreign governments.

d. To avoid giving needless offense to other nationalities or individuals.

e. To eliminate personal opinions presented in despatches and not acted upon by the Department. To this consideration there is one qualification—in connection with major decisions it is desirable, where possible, to show the alternative presented to the Department before the decision was made.

Documents selected for publication in the *Foreign Relations* volumes are referred to the Department of State Classification/Declassification Center for declassification clearance. The Center reviews

the documents, makes declassification decisions, and obtains the clearance of geographic and functional bureaus of the Department of State, as well as of other appropriate agencies of the government.

John P. Glennon supervised the planning of this volume. Charles S. Sampson edited the materials covering the first half of the year and Ronald D. Landa the last 6 months.

Vicki E. Futscher performed the technical editing under the supervision of Rita M. Baker. Max Franke prepared the index.

William Z. Slany
The Historian
Bureau of Public Affairs

Contents

Preface III

List of Sources VII

List of Abbreviations XIII

List of Persons XVII

Vietnam:

I. Visit of General Edward G. Lansdale to Vietnam, January 2–14 1

II. United States efforts to obtain South Vietnamese acceptance of the Basic Counterinsurgency Plan, February–April 29

III. Creation of the Presidential Task Force on Vietnam and the drafting of a program of action on Vietnam, April–May 74

IV. Vice President Johnson's trip to Asia, May 9–24, and the visit of Vietnamese Secretary of State for the Presidency Thuan to Washington, June 12–17 135

V. Special Financial Group Mission to Vietnam, June 17–July 15 179

VI. Consideration within the United States Government of the Special Financial Group recommendations, July–August 228

VII. United States and Vietnamese Government response to increased Viet Cong activity, September–October 292

VIII. The Taylor Mission to Southeast Asia, October 15–November 3 380

IX. United States Government consideration of the Taylor Mission report, November 3–15 477

X. Implementation of the Taylor Mission report, November 15–December 15 615

XI. The Secretary of Defense's First Conference on Vietnam, held at Honolulu, December 16, and its aftermath 739

Index 769

List of Sources

A. Unpublished Sources

Department of State

Central Files

Decimal files of the Department of State

Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240

Files of William P. Bundy for the 1960's

Conference Files: Lot 65 D 366

Collection of documentation on official visits by heads of government and foreign ministers to the United States and on major international conferences attended by the Secretary of State, as maintained by the Executive Secretariat of the Department of State

G/PM Files: Lot 64 D 354

Miscellaneous top secret subject files maintained by the Combined Policy Staff of the Office of Politico-Military Affairs for 1954–1961

INR–NIE Files

Files retained by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research containing copies of the National Intelligence Estimates and Special National Intelligence Estimates including NIE's and SNIE's for 1961

Johnson Files

Subject files of U. Alexis Johnson for various positions held in the 1960's. Scheduled for transfer to the Lyndon B. Johnson Library

Presidential Correspondence: Lot 66 D 204

Exchanges of correspondence between the President and the heads of foreign governments for 1953–1964, as maintained by the Executive Secretariat of the Department of State

Presidential Correspondence: Lot 66 D 476

Correspondence of the President with various heads of state, 1961–1966

Presidential Correspondence: Lot 77 D 163

Correspondence of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson with the Chairman of the Soviet Union, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, and the President of France, 1961–1964

Rusk Files: Lot 72 D 192

Files of Secretary of State Dean Rusk, 1961–1969, including texts of speeches and public statements, miscellaneous correspondence files, White House correspondence, chronological files, and memoranda of telephone conversations.

S/P Files: Lot 67 D 548

Subject files, country files, chronological files, documents, drafts, and related correspondence of the Policy Planning Staff for 1957–1961.

S/S–NSC Files: Lot 70 D 265

Master set of papers pertaining to National Security Council meetings, including policy papers, position papers, administrative documents, but not minutes of the meetings themselves, for 1961–1966, as maintained by the Executive Secretariat.

S/S–NSC Files: Lot 72 D 316

Master file of National Security Action Memoranda (NSAMs), 1961–1968.

S/S–NSC (Miscellaneous) Files: Lot 66 D 95

Administrative and miscellaneous National Security Council documentation, including NSC Records of Action as maintained by the Executive Secretariat for 1947–1963.

Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation: Lot 65 D 330

Memoranda of the Secretary's and Under Secretary's conversations, 1961–1964.

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Files of the interagency Vietnam Working Group, 1960–1962.

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Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland

Record Group 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts of the United States

Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 335

Classified files pertaining to U.S. Information Agency activities of the Embassy at Saigon, 1959–1961, formerly Lot 65 F 42.

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Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 68 A 5159

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Record Group 306, Records of the International Communication Agency

USIA/IOP Files: FRC 67 A 222

Subject files of the Office of Policy, 1963–1965.

USIA/IAF Files: FRC 68 A 1415

Files of the Office of the Director of the U.S. Information Agency, 1961–1962; action copies retained by the Assistant Director for the Far East, 1963–1964.

Record Group 330, Records of the Office of the Secretary of Defense

Lansdale Files: FRC 63 A 1803

Subject and country files of Edward G. Lansdale, Deputy Assistant and Assistant to the Secretary of Defense (Special Operations), 1957–1961.

McNamara Files: FRC 71 A 3470

Files of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, 1961–1968.

OASD/ISA Files: FRC 64 A 2382

General and country files of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs for 1961.

OSD Files: FRC 65 A 3078

Miscellaneous files of the Secretary of Defense, Deputy Secretary of Defense, their aides, and the Administrative Secretary to the Secretary of Defense, 1953–1963, and personal files of Donald A. Quarles predating his service as Deputy Secretary of Defense (prior to August 15, 1955).

OSD Files: FRC 66 A 3542

Records of the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense and their Special Assistants, 1962.

OSD Files: FRC 71 A 6489

Miscellaneous records of the Secretary of Defense, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and their assistants, 1951–1966.

OSD Files: FRC 77-131

Miscellaneous records pertaining to Cuba, Vietnam, Laos, Berlin, Soviet weapons, and the Republic of China, 1962–1972.

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MAAG/Vietnam Files: FRC 64 A 2424

Records of the Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam, 1960–1961.

National Defense University, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.

Lemnitzer Papers

Papers of General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, Chief of Staff of the Army, 1959–1960; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1960–1962.

Taylor Papers

Papers of General Maxwell D. Taylor, Chief of Staff of the Army, 1955–1959; Military Adviser to the President, 1961–1962; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1962–1964.

Naval Historical Center, U.S. Navy Yard, Washington, D.C.

Anderson Papers

Papers of Admiral George W. Anderson, Chief of Naval Operations, 1961–1963.

Burke Papers

Papers of Admiral Arleigh A. Burke, Chief of Naval Operations, 1955–1961.

CINCPAC Message Files

Files of the Commander in Chief, Pacific.

United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

Kraemer Papers

John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts

National Security Files (NSF)

Bromley Smith Series

Departments and Agencies Series

Meetings and Memos Series

Regional Security Series

Trip and Conference Series

Vietnam Country Series

President's Appointment Books

President's Office Files (POF)

Schlesinger Papers

Sorensen Papers

Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Austin, Texas

Rusk Appointment Books

Vice Presidential Security Files

University of Montana, Missoula, Montana

Mansfield Papers

Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut

Bowles Papers

Hoover Institution Archives, Palo Alto, California

Williams Papers

Private Collection of W. Averell Harriman, Washington, D.C.

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List of Abbreviations

A, *airgram*
acft, *aircraft*
Adm, Admiral
AF, Air Force
AFB, Air Force Base
AFL-CIO, American Federation of Labor, Congress of Industrial Organizations
AP, Associated Press
ARPAC, Army of the Pacific
ARVN, Army of the Republic of Vietnam
B, Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, Department of State
B/FAC, Deputy Coordinator for Foreign Assistance, Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs
BIS, British Information Services
BNA, Office of British and Northern European Affairs, Department of State
bn(s), battalion(s)
CA, *circular airgram*
CAS, Controlled American Source
CENTO, Central Treaty Organization
CF, Conference File
CG, Civil Guard
ChCom, Chinese Communist
ChNats, Chinese Nationalists
CHMAAG, Chief, Military Assistance Advisory Group
CHMAAG SVN, Chief, Military Assistance Advisory Group, South Vietnam
CIA, Central Intelligence Agency
CINCPAC, Commander in Chief, Pacific
CINCPACFLT, Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet
CINCUSARPAC, Commander in Chief U.S. Army, Pacific
CIO, Central Intelligence Organization
CIP, Counterinsurgency plan
CNO, Chief of Naval Operations
Codel, Congressional Delegation
Comdr, Commander
COMUS Vietnam, Commander of U.S. Forces, Vietnam
CONUS, Continental United States
CP, Communist Party
CT, country team
CY, *calendar year*
DA, series indicator for telegrams from the Department of Army
DA IN, designation for cables received at the Department of Army Command Center
DAC, Development Assistance Corporation
DCM, Deputy Chief of Mission
DEF, series indicator for telegrams from the Department of Defense
DefSec, Secretary of Defense
Deptel, Department of State telegram
dissem, dissemination
DJSM, Director of the Joint Staff memorandum
DMZ, demilitarized zone
DOD, Department of Defense
DRV, Democratic Republic of Vietnam
DTG, date time group
EDCOR, Defense psychological warfare project in the Philippines during the 1950's

Embdespt, Embassy despatch
Embtel, Embassy telegram
Emtel, Embassy telegram
EUR, Bureau of European Affairs, Department of State
FAL, Forces d'Armee de Laos (Lao Armed Forces)
FBI, Federal Bureau of Investigation
FE, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, Department of State

FE/SEA, Office of Southeast Asian Affairs, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, Department of State
FECON, Far East Conference
FO, Foreign Office
fol, following
FonOff, Foreign Office
FRC, Federal Records Center
FSO, Foreign Service Officer
FY, fiscal year
FYI, for your information
G, Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Gen, General
GNA, Greek National Army
gp, group
GOI, Government of India
GOP, Government of Philippines
GRC, Government of the Republic of China
GVN, Government of Vietnam
Hq, Headquarters
Hq Det, Headquarters Detachment
ICA, International Cooperation Administration; intelligence collection area
ICC, International Control Commission
IMF, International Monetary Fund
info, information
INR, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State
IO, Bureau of International Organization Affairs, Department of State
IO/UNP, Office of United Nations Political and Security Affairs, Bureau of International Organization Affairs, Department of State
IPS/IBS, International Press Service, International Broadcasting Service
ISA, Office of International Security Affairs, Department of Defense
ISC, Internal Security Council
JCS, Joint Chiefs of Staff
JCSM, Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum
JGS, Joint General Staff
JUSMAG, Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group
JUSMAPG, Joint U.S. Military Advisory and Planning Group
km, kilometer
kw, kilowatt
L, Office of the Legal Adviser, Department of State
LOC, Lines of Communication
log, logistic
MAAG, Military Assistance Advisory Group
MAGCH-CS, series indicator for telegrams from the Chief of Staff of the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group
MAGCH-LO, series indicator for telegrams from the Liaison Office of the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group
MAGCH-SA, series indicator for telegrams from the Special Assistant to the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group
MAP, Military Assistance Program
MilAd, Military Adviser
MNR, Vietnamese political group
msg, message
MSP, Mutual Security Program
MSU, Michigan State University
NATO, North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO, Noncommissioned Officer
NEA, Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Department of State
niact, night action; communications indicator requiring attention by the recipient at any hour of the day or night
NIE, National Intelligence Estimate
NISC, National International Security Council
Noforn, no foreign dissemination
NPSS, National Police and Security Service
NSAM, National Security Action Memorandum
NVN, North Vietnam
OAS, Organization of American States
OASD/ISA, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
OPLAN, operation plan
OSA, Office of the Special Assistant to the Ambassador in Vietnam
OSD, Office of the Secretary of Defense
OSO/OSD, Office of Special Operations, Office of the Secretary of Defense
PACAF, Pacific Air Force
PACFLT, Pacific Fleet
PACOM, Pacific Command

PAO, Public Affairs Officer
PI, photo interpretation
PL, Public Law, Pathet Lao
POL, petroleum, oil, and lubricants
PolAd, Political Adviser
POW, prisoner of war
PPC, Policy Planning Council, Department of State
PPS, Policy Planning Staff, Department of State
PsyOps, Psychological Operations
PsyWar, Psychological Warfare
RAdm, Rear Admiral
RCT, Regimental Combat Team
ref, reference
reftel, reference telegram
RKG, Royal Khmer Government
RLA, Royal Laotian Army
RLG, Royal Laotian Government
ROK, Republic of Korea
RVNAF, Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
S, Office of the Secretary of State
S/P, Policy Planning Staff, Department of State
S/S, Executive Secretariat, Department of State
SC, United Nations Security Council
SDC, Self-Defense Corps
SEA, Southeast Asia, Office of Southeast Asian Affairs, Department of State
SEATO, Southeast Asian Treaty Organization
SecDef, Secretary of Defense
SecGen, Secretary-General
SEPES, Service for Social and Political Studies, Vietnamese Civilian Intelligence Agency
SFG, Special Financial Group
SGN, series indicator for telegrams from the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam
SNIE, Special National Intelligence Estimate
SPA, Office of Southwest Pacific Affairs, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, Department of State
SVN, South Vietnam
TF(VN), Task Force (on Vietnam)
Toaid, series indicator for telegrams sent to the Agency for International Development (AID) in Washington from AID missions in the field
trfd, transferred
trps, troops
TS, Top Secret
U, Under Secretary of State, Unclassified
U/MSC, Deputy Coordinator of the Mutual Security Program, Office of the Under Secretary of State
UAR, United Arab Republic
UDT, underwater demolition teams
UK, United Kingdom
UN, United Nations
UNP, Office of United Nations Political and Security Affairs, Bureau of International Organization Affairs, Department of State
US/FW, U S field workers
US/MC, U S memorandum of conversation
USA, U S Army, United States of America
USAF, U S Air Force
USAMHI, U S Army Military History Institute
USARPAC, U S Army, Pacific
USCOB, U S Command, Berlin
U.S. ELINT, U S electronic intelligence
USFV, U S Forces, Vietnam
USG, U S Government
USIA, U S Information Agency
USIS, U S Information Service
USOM, U S Operations Mission
VNA, Vietnamese Army
VOA, Voice of America
VC, Viet Cong
VM, Viet Minh
VN, Vietnam, Vietnamese
VNA, Vietnamese National Army
VNAF, Vietnamese Armed Forces
Z, Greenwich Mean Time
Zone D, Viet Cong jungle base area northeast of Saigon

List of Persons

Alphand, Hervé, French Ambassador to the United States
Alsop, Joseph, syndicated columnist
Amory, Robert, Deputy Director for Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency
Anderson, Daniel V., Director of the Office of Southeast Asian Affairs, Department of State; Member of the Interdepartmental Task Force on Vietnam from May 1961
Anderson, Adm. George W., Chief of Naval Operations from August 1, 1961
Anspacher, John M., Counselor for Public Affairs in Vietnam
Anthis, Brig. Gen. Roland H., Commander of the U.S. 2d Air Division

Bagley, Lt. Cmdr. Worth H., Naval Aide to the President's Military Representative
Ball, George W., Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, February 1–December 3, 1961; thereafter Under Secretary of State
Bao Dai, exiled Emperor of Vietnam
Bell, David E., Director of the Bureau of the Budget
Bissell, Richard, Special Assistant for Planning and Coordination, Central Intelligence Agency
Black, Col. Edwin F., Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense; Member of the Presidential Task Force on Vietnam
Bohlen, Charles E., Special Assistant to the Secretary of State
Bonesteel, Maj. Gen. Charles H., III, Secretary of the General Staff, Department of the Army; Member of the Presidential Task Force on Vietnam, April–May 1961
Bowles, Chester, Under Secretary of State, January 25–December 3, 1961; thereafter Ambassador at Large
Brown, Brig. Gen. George S., Secretary of Defense's Military Assistant
Brown, Lewis Dean, Deputy Director of the Office of West European Affairs, Department of State, July 23–December 24, 1961
Bundy, McGeorge, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Bundy, William P., Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
Burke, Adm. Arleigh A., Chief of Naval Operations until August 1, 1961
Burris, Col. Howard L., Vice President's Military Aide
Buu, see Hoan Buu

Cabell, Gen. Charles P., Deputy Director of Central Intelligence
Chatterjee, D.N., Minister at the Indian Embassy in the United States
Chayes, Abram J., Legal Adviser, Department of State, from February 6, 1961
Chiang Kai-shek, President of the Republic of China
Cleveland, Harland, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs from February 23, 1961
Cleveland, Robert G., Special Assistant in the Office of Southeast Asian Affairs, Department of State
Clifton, Brig. Gen. Chester V., President's Military Aide

Colby, William E., Office of the Special Assistant to the Ambassador in Vietnam, Central Intelligence Agency
Collins, Gen. J. Lawton, Special Representative of the United States in Vietnam, 1954–1955
Connally, John, Secretary of the Navy, January 25–December 20, 1961
Cottrell, Sterling J., Political Adviser to the Commander in Chief, Pacific, until April 1961, Director, Interdepartmental Task Force on Vietnam from May 1961
Couve de Murville, Maurice, French Foreign Minister
Cross, Charles T., Officer in Charge of Laos Affairs, Office of Southeast Asian Affairs, Department of State
Cunningham, H. Francis, Jr., Counselor-General of the Embassy in Vietnam until October 29, 1961, Charge in September

Decker, Gen. George H., Army Chief of Staff
Desai, Manilal Jagdish, Foreign Secretary of the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Diehl, William, Chief of the Far East Division, Office of International Finance, Department of the Treasury, Member of the Interdepartmental Task Force on Vietnam from May 1961, Member of the Staley Group
Dulles, Allen W., Director of Central Intelligence until November 1961
Dulles, John Foster, Secretary of State, 1953–1959
Duong Van Minh, Maj. Gen., "Big Minh," Commander of the Army Field Command, Republic of Vietnam Army
Durbrow, Elbridge, Ambassador to Vietnam until May 3, 1961
Dutton, Frederick G., President's Special Assistant January 20–December 4, 1961, thereafter Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations

Eisenhower, Dwight D., President of the United States until January 20, 1961

Felt, Adm. Harry D., Commander in Chief, Pacific
Fitzgerald, Desmond, Member, Presidential Task Force on Vietnam, April–May 1961
Flesch, Col. J.M., Assistant to the Director, Far Eastern Region, International Security Affairs, Department of Defense
Fowler, Henry H., Under Secretary of the Treasury
Fulbright, J. William, Senator from Arkansas and Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Galbraith, John Kenneth, Ambassador to India from April 18, 1961
Gardiner, Arthur Z., Director of the U.S. Operations Mission in Vietnam
Gilpatric, Roswell L., Deputy Secretary of Defense from January 24, 1961, Chairman of the Presidential Task Force on Vietnam, April–May
Godel, William H., Deputy Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency, Department of Defense
Gromyko, Andrei A., Soviet Foreign Minister

Hamilton, Fowler, Administrator of the Agency for International Development from October 3, 1961
Hammarskjöld, Dag, Secretary-General of the United Nations until his death September 18, 1961
Hand, Frank M., Department of Defense Member of the Interdepartmental Task Force on Vietnam from May 1961
Harriman, W. Averell, Ambassador at Large, February 13–December 3, 1961, thereafter Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs
Heavner, Theodore J.C., Second Secretary in Vietnam
Heeney, Arnold D.P., Canadian Ambassador to the United States

Heinz, Rear Adm. Luther C., Director for Far Eastern Affairs, International Security Affairs, Department of Defense; Member, Presidential Task Force on Vietnam, April–May 1961; Member, Interdepartmental Task Force on Vietnam from May 1961

Hilsman, Roger, Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, from February 19, 1961

Ho Chi Minh, President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

Hoan Buu, Head of the Research Department of the Vietnamese National Bank

Hoang Thuy Nam, Col., Chief Liaison Officer of the Republic of Vietnam to the International Control Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam, kidnapped by the Viet Cong on October 1, 1961, found murdered October 17, 1961

Hohler, Henry Arthur Frederick, British Ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam

Home, Douglas-, Alexander F., British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs

Hood, Viscount Samuel, British Minister in the United States

Horgan, Rogers B., Officer in Charge of India–Ceylon–Nepal Affairs, Department of State

Howe, James W., Program Officer at the U.S. Operations Mission in Vietnam

Johnson, Lyndon B., Vice President of the United States from January 20, 1961

Johnson, Robert, Member of the National Security Council Staff and Alternate Member of the Interdepartmental Task Force on Vietnam

Johnson, U. Alexis, Member of the Presidential Task Force on Vietnam, April–May 1961; Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs from May 2, 1961

Jorden, William J., Member of the Policy Planning Council, Department of State, from August 1, 1961

Kennedy, John F., President of the United States from January 20, 1961

Kent, Col. J.R., Assistant to the Director for Far Eastern Affairs of the Office of International Security Affairs of the Department of Defense; alternate member of the Interdepartmental Task Force on Vietnam

Khoman Thanat, Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs

Khrushchev, Nikita S., Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union

Kohler, Foy D., Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs

Komer, Robert W., National Security Council staff member

Labouisse, Henry R., Director of the International Cooperation Administration, March 1–October 3, 1961

Ladejinsky, Wolf, U.S. Adviser to President Ngo Dinh Diem on Agrovilles

Lansdale, Brig. Gen. Edward G., Deputy Assistant for Special Operations to the Secretary of Defense until May 1961, thereafter Assistant for Special Operations to the Secretary of Defense; Member, Presidential Task Force on Vietnam, April–May 1961

Le Van Kim, Brig. Gen., Deputy Commanding General, ARVN Field Command

Lebel, Claude, Minister-Counselor of the French Embassy in the United States

Leddy, John M., Assistant Secretary of the Treasury

Ledyard, R.T.D., Counselor of the British Embassy in the United States

Lemnitzer, Gen. Lyman L., Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Levy, Col. Robert M., JCS Representative on the Presidential Task Force on Vietnam, April–May 1961; JCS Representative on the Interdepartmental Task Force on Vietnam from May 1961

McConaughy, Walter P., Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, April 24–December 3, 1961, thereafter Special Assistant in the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Administration

McCone, John A., Director of Central Intelligence from November 29, 1961

McGarr, Lt. Gen. Lionel C., Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam

McGhee, George C., Counselor of the Department of State and Chairman of the Policy Planning Council, February 16–December 3, 1961, thereafter Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs

Macmillan, Harold, British Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury

McNamara, Robert S., Secretary of Defense from January 21, 1961

Mansfield, Mike, Senator from Montana and member of the Foreign Relations Committee, Majority Leader after January 3, 1961

Mao Tse-tung, Chairman of the Central Committee, People's Republic of China

Martin, Edwin W., Political Adviser to the Commander in Chief, Pacific, from September 3, 1961

Mendenhall, Joseph A., Counselor for Political Affairs in Vietnam and Chairman of the Country Team Staff Committee

Murrow, Edward R., Director of the U.S. Information Agency from March 21, 1961

Nehru, Braj Kumar, Indian Ambassador to the United States

Nehru, Jawaharlal, Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs and for Atomic Energy of India

Neilson, N. Paul, Assistant Director for the Far East, U.S. Information Agency

Ngo Dinh Can, brother of President Diem and effective unofficial governor of central Vietnam

Ngo Dinh Diem, President and Secretary of National Defense of the Republic of Vietnam

Ngo Dinh Nhu, brother of President Diem and Political Adviser to the President

Ngo Dinh Nhu, Madame, sister-in-law of President Diem and official hostess for the President, daughter of Tran Van Chuong

Ngo Dinh Thuc, brother of President Diem and Archbishop of Hue

Nguyen Dinh Thuan, Vietnamese Secretary of State for the Presidency of the Republic of Vietnam and Assistant Secretary of State for National Defense; after May 27, 1961, Secretary of State for the Presidency in Charge of Security Coordination and Assistant Secretary of State for National Defense

Nguyen Khanh, Brig. Gen., Chief of Staff, Joint General Staff, Army of the Republic of Vietnam

Nguyen Ngoc Tho, Vice President of the Republic of Vietnam and Secretary of State for National Economy; after May 27, 1961, Vice President and Coordinating Secretary of State for Economic Development

Nitze, Paul H., Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs from January 29, 1961

Nolting, Frederick E., Jr., Ambassador to Vietnam from May 10, 1961

Nu, U, Burmese Prime Minister

Ormsby-Gore, David, British Ambassador to the United States from October 1961

Owen, Henry, member of the Policy Planning Council, Department of State

Parker, Maj. Gen. T.W., USA, Special Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Parsons, J. Graham, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs until March 30, 1961

Phoumi Nosavan, Gen., Laotian Deputy Premier and Minister of Defense

Pushkin, Georgi M., Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister responsible for Far Eastern Affairs and Soviet negotiator at the Geneva Conference on Laos

Redick, Joseph, attache in Laos
Rice, Edward E., Member of the Policy Planning Staff, Department of State
Rostow, Walt W., Deputy Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs until December 4, 1961, thereafter Counselor of the Department of State and Chairman of the Policy Planning Council; Member of the Presidential Task Force on Vietnam, April–May 1961
Rowan, Carl T., Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs from February 27, 1961; observer on the Interdepartmental Task Force on Vietnam
Rowen, Henry S., Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Planning and NSC)
Rusk, Dean, Secretary of State from January 21, 1961

Salans, Carl Fredric, attorney-adviser in the Office of the Assistant Legal Adviser for Far Eastern Affairs, Department of State
Salinger, Pierre, President's Press Secretary
Sarit Thanarat, Thai Prime Minister
Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr., President's Special Assistant
Sibley, Brig. Gen. Alden K., Deputy Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam
Sihanouk, Prince Norodom, Head of State of Cambodia, also President of the Council of Ministers from January 26, 1961
Silver, Warren, Operations Center, Department of State; Member of the Interdepartmental Task Force on Vietnam; Member of the Staley Group
Smith, Bromley, Acting Executive Secretary of the National Security Council until August 1961, thereafter Executive Secretary
Smith, Gen. Frederick, Commander of the Fourth Allied Tactical Air Force and Commander in Chief of the U.S. Air Forces in Europe until July 1, 1961; thereafter Deputy to the Air Force Chief of Staff
Sorensen, Theodore C., President's Special Counsel
Sorensen, Thomas C., Deputy Director for Policy and Plans, U.S. Information Agency, from February 21, 1961; Member of the Presidential Task Force on Vietnam, April–May 1961
Souvanna Phouma, Prince, Premier of the neutralist Government of Laos
Stahr, Elvis J., Jr., Secretary of the Army from January 24, 1961
Staley, Eugene A., Research Director of the Stanford Research Institute
Steeves, John M., Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, April–May 1961, prior to and thereafter, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs
Stevenson, Adlai E., III, Permanent Representative to the United Nations from January 23, 1961
Stewart, Charles Cosmo Bruce, Consul-General at the British Embassy in the Republic of Vietnam
Sukarno, Achmed, President and Prime Minister of Indonesia
Symington, Stuart, Democratic Senator from Mississippi

Talbot, Phillips, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asia Affairs from April 21, 1961
Taylor, Gen. Maxwell D., President's Military Representative from July 1, 1961
Templar, Field Marshal Sir Gerald Walter Robert, British High Commander and Director of Operations in Malaya, 1951–1954

Thompson, Robert G.K., former British Permanent Secretary of Defense in the Malayan Federation, Head of the British Advisory Mission, Vietnam, from September 1961

Tran Van Chuong, Ambassador of the Republic of Vietnam to the United States and father of Madame Nhu

Tran Van Don, Gen., I Corps Commander, Republic of Vietnam Army

Tran Van Tho, Director General of Information, Republic of Vietnam

Trueheart, William C., Counselor and Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy in Vietnam from October 29, 1961

Tubby, Roger W., Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs from March 10, 1961

Tunku, Abdul Rahman, first Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs of Malaya

Vu Quoc Thuc, Dean of the Saigon University Law School

Weiss, Seymour, Senior Planning Officer, Office of the Deputy Coordinator for Foreign Assistance, Under Secretary of State, until November 4, 1961; thereafter Special Assistant to the Secretary of State, observer on the Interdepartmental Task Force on Vietnam from May 1961

Wheeler, Lt. Gen. Earle G., Director, Joint Staff Organization, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Williams, Haydn, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, Member of the Interdepartmental Task Force on Vietnam from May 1961, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for NSC and Plans

Wilson, Donald, Deputy Director of the U.S. Information Agency, from January 20, 1961

Wood, Chalmers B., Officer in Charge of Vietnam Affairs in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, Department of State, Member of the Interdepartmental Task Force on Vietnam from May 1961

Woodworth, C.J., Canadian Representative on the International Control Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam until November 1961

Young, Kenneth T., Ambassador to Thailand from June 22, 1961

VIETNAM

I. VISIT OF GENERAL EDWARD G. LANSDALE TO VIETNAM, JANUARY 2–14

1. Paper Prepared by the Country Team Staff Committee[1]

Saigon, [January 4, 1961.]

BASIC COUNTERINSURGENCY PLAN FOR VIET-NAM

1. Situation

a. General

(1) Communist-inspired insurgency in SVN, aimed at the destruction of authority and prestige of established government, is a prelude to further inroads designed ultimately to absorb SVN into the Communist bloc.

(2) Existing Conditions

(a) General. Developments in South Viet-Nam over the past year indicate a trend that is adverse to the stability and effectiveness of President Diem's government. Beginning in December 1959 and continuing to the present, there has been a mounting increase throughout South Viet-Nam of Viet Cong terrorist activities and guerrilla warfare. This activity has included armed propaganda and leaflet distribution, taxing of the population for food, money, and medicines, kidnapping and murder of village and hamlet officials,

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/1-461. Secret. The Country Team Staff Committee was chaired by Mendenhall and composed of officers from MAAG, USOM, USIS, OSA, and the Embassy. Transmitted as enclosure 1 to despatch 276 from Saigon, January 4.

The plan consisted of a table of contents, the basic plan, 3 annexes, 15 appendices, and 5 tabs. Only the basic plan is printed here. For the draft plan transmitted to Saigon in 1960, see Def 982094, September 16, *Foreign Relations*, 1958–1960, vol. I, p. 572. In despatch 486, Ambassador Durbrow commented that a number of the indispensable recommendations would "probably not be particularly palatable" to the Government of Vietnam, especially certain political actions and ideas about military-civilian relationships. The Ambassador completed his comments by stating that consideration should be given to what steps "we are prepared to take to encourage, or if necessary to force, acceptance of all essential elements of the plan."

Throughout January the Embassy in Saigon transmitted minor changes to the plan, especially in the summary table of costs. These messages are in Department of State, Central File 751K.5-MSP.

road and canal ambushes; and armed attacks against agrovilles, land development centers, Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps posts, as well as small army units. Through the use of these tactics current Viet Cong military and political objectives are the overthrow of the Diem Government. Their immediate objectives are to eliminate any semblance of GVN control in rural areas, particularly the Mekong Delta, and establish so-called "liberated zones."

(b) Political. Politically, discontent with the Diem Government has been prevalent for some time among intellectuals and elite circles and has been rising among the peasantry and, to some extent, labor and urban business groups. Criticism of these elements focuses on Ngo family rule, especially the roles of the President's brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, and Madame Nhu and the influence of the clandestine Can Lao political apparatus of the regime. An even more important element in the political situation is the criticism of the President's leadership within government circles, including the official bureaucracy and the military. In the past, such discontent and criticism had been centered on Diem's brothers, Ngo Dinh Nhu and Ngo Dinh Can, as directors of the allegedly corrupt Can Lao Party.

Further aggravating many of the government's problems is the active and partly successful campaign of the Viet Cong to discredit President Diem and weaken the government's authority through political subversion, as well as through military action. Among other factors making this possible is the void between the GVN and its people which stems from the failure of the GVN to communicate understandably with the population and, in reverse, the lack of an effective mechanism whereby the people can in their terms communicate with the GVN. Taking advantage of this lack of effective communication and the GVN's inability to protect the people the Viet Cong has had considerable success in sowing disaffection and disrupting effective administration of the government among the population. This is especially true in the Capital, 1st and 5th Military Regions. Viet Cong successes in these regions are due to the large number among the population who, whether out of terror or sympathy, give support to the Viet Cong. Aided by this situation, the Viet Cong is striving to establish a political apparatus parallel to the GVN. Below province level in the 5th Military Region, no effective GVN control exists in many areas. The Viet Cong are increasing the void by taxation, terroristic acts, attacks on Self Defense posts, assassination of village and provincial officials, and simultaneously a systematic development of the Viet Cong political apparatus to fill the void. In view of the above conditions the principal task facing the GVN is restoration of individual security.

(c) Military. Military force, in the form of increased communist insurgency, is clearly the major immediate threat to the stability of

Viet-Nam today. South Viet-Nam is unique in that it is the only country in the world which is forced to defend itself against a communist internal subversion action, while at the same time being subject to the militarily supportable threat of a conventional external attack from communist North Viet-Nam. The RVNAF force basis is inadequate to meet both these threats.[2]

The problem is twofold, although at present the counterinsurgency phase is the more dangerous and immediate. In this counterinsurgency fight RVNAF is on the defensive. Approximately 75% of ARVN is committed to pacification missions, about half of these being committed to static guard and security roles. The military chain of command has usually been violated at the expense of unity of effort and command. No adequate operations control or overall planning system presently exists, although significant progress has been made in the development of military plans. The President has exercised arbitrary control of operations, by-passing command channels of the JGS and often Corps and Division staff. Resources have been fragmented to provincial control. The above practices appear to have been designed to divide responsibility in order to guard against the possibility of a military coup through placing too much power in the hands of a single subordinate. The guerrilla problem has become much more serious than the Civil Guard can manage, thereby requiring a disproportionately large RVNAF commitment, which has further resulted in a serious weakening of the RVNAF capability for defense against internal or overt attack in force. Rotation within RVNAF and Civil Guard cannot be accomplished regularly. Many units have been on operations for a year or more without relief, because RVNAF strength is insufficient to permit an adequate rotation policy and to conduct adequate border and coastal surveillance. Many troops are battle weary, in a state of low morale, and in need of recuperation and training. Notwithstanding the above deficiencies, GVN plans have recently been developed for the RVNAF Command Control and Logistic structure which upon implementation, possibly in the near future, should correct major deficiencies if adequate military strength is provided.

The complete divorce of command control from logistics support in the field has resulted in a lethargic and cumbersome requisitioning and supply system. Requisitions from tactical units even below division level must be submitted through channels to agencies of the Defense Department in Saigon with consequent red tape before issues can be authorized and deliveries effected. Reorganization plans

[2] See two last sentences of penultimate paragraph of covering despatch for Ambassador Durbrow's views on this subject. [Footnote in the source text. Regarding these views, see footnote 1 above.]

being developed will establish "Logistic Commands" in place of present military regions and under operational control of their respective Corps commanders, thus enabling tactical units to follow-through on deliveries against their requisitions. The poor, and in some regions nonexistent, communications systems and road net are primary logistics obstacle [*obstacle*] in Viet-Nam. Although the President has continued to make strenuous efforts to improve the road net, military movements must continue to rely on light more mobile systems and airlift for the foreseeable future. Implementation of the concept of light mobile logistic support with pack supply suitable to mountain trails is urgent if RVNAF is to take offensive against insurgency.

Some elements of desirable counterinsurgency actions have been recommended piecemeal to GVN and RVNAF authorities. These elements have been incorporated herein in order to form a comprehensive and coordinated plan for counterinsurgency actions. President Diem and RVNAF military authorities appear to be receptive to significant improvement of the national military establishment and some of the actions contemplated by this plan have actually been taken and others are under consideration by the RVNAF authorities. The GVN's plans for implementing counterinsurgency measures are progressing at an increasing tempo concurrently with the preparation of this counterinsurgency plan. It should, therefore, be read with the thought that some elements may already have been implemented or may be in the process of implementation.

The current military intelligence capability of the RVNAF is inadequate to support the critical intelligence requirements of all echelons of the armed forces. Although the GVN has recently agreed that improvement is needed the intelligence agencies of GVN are not now adequately integrated with the various military and quasi-military intelligence systems. The processing of military intelligence is too slow for timely tactical reaction. The major reason for this slow intelligence responsiveness is the total lack of an adequate civilian communications system in the provinces. While the military command communications system is frequently the best in an area, it is often inadequate, overcrowded, and not comprehensive enough for anti-insurgency intelligence gathering and disseminating needs.

(d) Economic. The economic health of the country, though not robust, has been improving rapidly. In the future, if current economic trends continue and the economy is not further disrupted by adverse security developments, the economy will be able, insofar as physical wealth is concerned, to provide for the consumption needs of a growing population and at the same time to finance a steadily increasing proportion of local military costs and could under favorable conditions meet essentially all these costs. Along with lack of

confidence in the future, a principal deterrent to economic progress is the avowed and effective VC campaign for the systematic sabotage of the public works program including progressive destruction of lines of communication, structures, agrovilles and the like when left unprotected by Civil Guard or ARVN units.

For the first several years after institution of direct U.S. aid to Viet-Nam the aid level was determined primarily on a budgetary gap basis, but early in 1959 this was shifted to a balance of payments basis. Since exports plus aid received exceeded imports, sizeable foreign exchange reserves were accumulated. The increase in reserves, together with the GVN's reluctance to tax the wealth accumulating in private hands, has led to a large money supply and an increasing budgetary deficit which could cause inflation.

Distribution of income is very uneven, with rural population receiving little of the benefits of an expanding economy, a fact which is believed to bear on their lack of positive support for the GVN.

The earlier U.S. Country Team-approved military budget of 6,066.9 million piastres for 1961 does not include various GVN proposals relating to the military and security forces. The budgetary aspects of these proposals will be fully discussed in Appendix IV to Annex C which will be submitted separately.

The several proposals in this counterinsurgency plan (see table on following page) will further increase the costs of the GVN's military and related budgets for security forces by perhaps as much as 478.8 million piastres. In subsequent years if the 20,000 force level increase is fully realized, annual costs of the Counterinsurgency Plan proposals will be about 876.9 million piastres.

In addition, a number of other suggestions have been accepted by the GVN, such as subsidization of rice prices to peasants, which will further increase financial pressures. Still other suggestions have been made, such as establishment of a system of payment for corvee labor and institution of a system of subsidies for agroville inhabitants, which, if accepted by the GVN, would add even more to budgetary costs.

Summary Table of Costs

Counterinsurgency Plan	*In Millions*					
	1961			Annual Costs		
	VN$	US$		VN$	US$	
		MAP	DS		MAP	DS
(1) 20,000 Force Increase	280.8	25.1	—	703.3	4.12	—
(2) Transfer of Civil Guard	140.2[1]	14.4[2]	6.9[3]	77.6[1]	5.5[2]	.3[3]
(3) Psychological Operations	.5	—	.15	*	—	*
(4) Communications, i.e., Village Alarm Systems	1.5	—	.5	*	—	*
(5) Junk Force	55.0	†	—	96.0	†	—
(6) Intelligence Activities	.3	†	—	*	†	—
(7) Canine Alarm Detachment	.5	—	—	*	—	—
Total	478.8	39.5	7.5	876.9	9.6	.3

The economic chapter being developed for separate submission will (a) provide further details on cost, (b) estimate the effect of these costs on the total budgetary deficit of the country, (c) suggest means of financing this deficit and (d) suggest certain economic activities to help counter communist insurgency.

(e) Summary. In view of known communist objectives in SVN, the known general situation and the dangerous political and military situation, if the GVN does not take immediate and extraordinary action to regain popular support and to correct the organizational and procedural weaknesses which contribute to the growth of the Viet Cong power, the Viet Cong can cause the overthrow of the present GVN government in the months to come.

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[1] Amounts given are in addition to annual Civil Guard costs of about 1,125 million piastres for pay and allowances, transportation, etc., all of which is normally covered by GVN's own budget. [Footnote in the source text.]

[2] These are initial costs of transfer and of first full year of force maintenance. Totals given do not include ARVN excess material to be used by the CG valued at $5.3 million in 1961 and approximately $2.0 million annually thereafter. [Footnote in the source text.]

[3] This is MAAG estimate of ICA programmed items pursuant to FY 1959 and FY 1960 ProAgs (Project No. 430-71-219) required by Civil Guards. This estimate is now under study by USOM. [Footnote in the source text. This project has not been identified further.]

* There may be small amounts required annually for the continuation of ongoing activities; these amounts would not be significant in terms of the overall magnitude of costs of the plan. [Footnote in the source text.]

† There will be certain MAP requirements for these purposes, but amounts are as yet undetermined. [Footnote in the source text.]

b. Enemy Forces: See Current Intelligence Estimates.

c. Friendly Forces:

(1) U.S.: See current Operations Plans. U.S. administration and logistic support to GVN will be coordinated by the Ambassador with the coordination of military logistics support to RVNAF the responsibility of Chief MAAG.

(2) GVN has an active military force of 150,000 spaces and an unorganized pool of about 120,000 prior service reservists. The major elements of the active force are three Corps headquarters, seven reduced strength Infantry Divisions; one Airborne Brigade; a Ranger Organization of approximately 9,000; token Air Force and Navy support, to include three Marine Battalions; and sub-minimal logistic support units. A Civil Guard Organization was placed under the operational control of the Department of Defense by Presidential decree early in December 1960 and will commence training on January 3, 1961, on a twenty-four week training cycle. Action is being taken to furnish MAP support to 32,000 of the Civil Guard Force of approximately 60,000. There are no approved plans for adding regular units to the 150,000-man force now in existence. However, President Diem has consistently stated his urgent need for a minimum 20,000 man increase in the RVNAF to improve security and permit rotation of ARVN units for training.

d. Assumptions:

(1) That the greatest immediate threat to the continued existence of the Republic of Viet-Nam is posed by the steady expansion of guerrilla warfare by the Vietnamese Communists, with the Mekong Delta as a political and military base.

(2) That North Viet-Nam has the capability of supporting guerrilla operations in SVN by infiltrating regular forces and cadres to strengthen locally recruited elements. (Guerrilla forces have increased from 3,500 to an ARVN estimate of 9,800 during 1960.)

(3) That at the present time the Diem Government offers the best hope for defeating the Viet Cong threat.

(4) That the Government of Viet-Nam has the basic potential to cope with the Viet Cong guerrilla threat if necessary corrective measures are taken and adequate forces are provided.

(5) That the gravity of this threat will continue until a maximum offensive and coordinated retaliatory effort is made by civil and military authorities.

(6) That the most vital consideration of US policy in Viet-Nam is to create governmental stability by the eradication of insurgency in the Republic of Viet-Nam and to that end the activities of all US agencies will be coordinated.

(7) That the Viet Cong, in coordination with the communist parties of Laos and Cambodia, will continue to build up a maximum effort against the Republic of Viet-Nam. The April '61 elections constitute particularly critical period.

(8) That the DRV has a current continuing military capability for external aggression against SVN.

2. *Mission:* Defeat Communist insurgency efforts in SVN.

3. *Execution:*

a. Objectives.

(1) GVN must take immediate and *extraordinary* action to:

(a) Suppress and defeat disruptive Communist activities in South Viet-Nam and concurrently maintain a capability to meet overt aggression.

(b) Establish and maintain political and economic control and stability.

(c) Interdict aid flowing to insurgents across Vietnamese borders, to include both police and military action in coordination with the adjacent nations of Laos and Cambodia.

(2) Country Team:

(a) Induce the GVN to adopt and vigorously prosecute Country Team Plans designed to defeat Communist insurgency.

b. Tasks.

(1) Political:

(a) Political tasks have been outlined in Embassy Telegram 624, September 16, 1960, and Embassy Telegram 1151, December 4, 1960. Action already taken to carry out those tasks was described in Embassy Telegram 802, October 15, 1960, Embassy Despatch 157, October 15, 1960; Embassy Telegram 1216, December 24, 1960; and Embassy Despatch 264, December 27, 1960. Further action in execution of these tasks is proposed in Embassy Telegram 1151.[9] In addition to tasks relating to the GVN administration itself, further steps are required in the field of development of independent and quasi-independent political institutions and organizations, such as labor unions, youth movements and political parties. Possible steps in this field are under study by the Country Team.

(2) Security:

(a) Establish an Emergency Operations Control System to include (Appendix I, Annex B):

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[9] For texts of telegrams 624, 802, 1151, and 1216, see *Foreign Relations*, 1958–1960, vol. I, pp. 575, 595, 707, and 739. For texts of despatches 157 and 264, see *ibid.*, pp. 598 and 745.

1. A national emergency council (GVN established an Internal Security Council 7 October 1960).

2. A director of operations (Permanent Secretary for National Defense so designated 7 October 1960) with responsive regional, provincial, district, and village internal security councils.

(b) Implement fully planning aspects of the national planning, programming, and budgeting system (Appendix II, Annex B).

(c) Develop and employ to optimum RVNAF capabilities to support emergency and related internal security operations on a fully coordinated schedule (Appendix III, Annex B).

(d) Take extraordinary action starting at highest levels of government and extending to the lowest political subdivision (the village) to establish and maintain internal security.

(e) Assign high priority to the development of intelligence/counterintelligence staff and operational procedure to provide not only timely and accurate knowledge of Viet Cong activities and organization within Viet-Nam, but also provide information to enable the GVN to correct sociological and economic problems which the communists are exploiting (Appendix IV, Annex B).

(f) Develop an adequate border/coastal patrol system (Appendix V, Annex B).

(g) Develop an adequate communication capability within GVN agencies to support emergency and related internal security operations (Appendix VI, Annex B).

(h) Employ full use of psychological and civil affairs programs in support of internal security actions (Appendix VII, Annex B).

(i) Establish concurrently means for assuring continued security (Appendix III, Annex B).

(j) Retain the Civil Guard under the temporary control of the Department of Defense for the duration of the emergency (Appendix VII, Annex B).

(k) To develop the force basis for the RVNAF to cope with the insurgency now threatening the GVN and to build capacity for resistance to external aggression (Annex A).

(3) Economic: to be forwarded in supplemental submission to this basic plan.

(4) Psychological:

(a) Improve communications between the Government of Viet-Nam and its people.

(b) Attract the loyalty of the population to the GVN and to the Diem regime.

(c) Acquaint the people with the aims and actions of the GVN, and persuade them that the GVN is acting in their interests.

(d) Counteract among the people and in the military sense within the RVNAF VC propaganda denigrating the Diem regime and painting it as opposed to the unification of North and South Viet-Nam.*

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* A handwritten note on the source text at this point reads "Easy on this, he does oppose."

(e) Foster a spirit of national unity and purpose among all elements of the Vietnamese society.

(f) Strengthen the people's confidence in and respect for the RVNAF as a security force vis-à-vis the VC.

(g) Raise South Viet-Nam's prestige among the peoples of other countries especially in Asia and Africa as a means of enhancing the GVN's national security and stability.

c. Concept of Operations:

(1) General:

(a) Political Operations. Refer to Embassy communications listed in political section under "Tasks" above.

(b) Politico/Military Operations. In order to provide protection which the people require, it is necessary to exercise more than an ordinary degree of control over the population. Among the more important operations required are those for exercising control in such manner as to isolate insurgents and sympathizers from the support of the populace. Such techniques as registration and identification, food control and control of movement will be implemented as appropriate.

(c) Military Operations

1. There are immediate actions, civil and military, which the GVN can and must take to halt or slow down the current and extremely serious adverse security trend until such time as the necessary increased offensive capability can be brought to bear. These actions include, of course, *extraordinary* action by the GVN to:

a. Further develop a national emergency operations control system. (Command relationships as described in Appendix I, Annex B.)
b. Implement the National Planning System.
c. Implement the plan for a national intelligence organization and system with particular emphasis on obtaining information at the village level, and integrating effort at the national level.
d. Fully employ military capabilities to include strengthening and reorganizing military command and control channels.
e. Establish a border/coastal surveillance system.
f. Improve the civil and military communications system.
g. Reduce attrition rate of armed forces and utilize the trained manpower pool.

2. Equally as essential as the above is the requirement to overcome inherent weakness in the current RVNAF force structure which contributes directly to the present deterioration in the morale, state of training, and combat effectiveness of the RVNAF. A minimum force increase of 20,000 is required to correct these present weaknesses and to furnish the offensive potential required to defeat the Viet Cong and maintain concurrently a capability for combatting overt attack. In this respect,

increased capabilities required to accomplish critical counterinsurgency objectives include:

a. Meaningful rotation of combat units.
b. Effective training.
c. Sufficient ARVN units to replace certain Civil Guard companies to be disengaged for training.
d. More effective surveillance of tremendous and rugged jungle and border areas and inland waterways.
e. Increased helicopter lift and close air support. (Indications are that Viet-Nam will receive 11 H-34's by end of March, 1961.)
f. An adequate intelligence capability.
g. Correction of the present imbalance between logistic support and combat units, and inclusion of additional support for the proposed increase in RVNAF combat troops and for logistical support of the Civil Guard.
h. Adequate forces in position to deter and to combat overt aggression and to prevent further expansion of the Viet Cong insurgency and concurrently communist infiltration of regular troops into SVN in support of the Viet Cong insurgency effort.
i. Establishment of communication means and procedures for lateral and vertical exchange of information at all levels, civil and military.

(d) Economic Operations. To be forwarded in supplemental submission.

(e) Psychological. (See Appendix VII, Annex B)

The exchange of information between the Government and its people is of underlying significance to drawing the two segments of Vietnamese society closer together. By means of a coordinated mechanism at the highest level of the GVN, psychological programs should be developed which not only will keep the people advised quickly and factually of what the government is doing and why, but also will encourage the people to respond to the government's actions in terms which will strengthen their feeling of participation in government and thus their loyalty to it.

Specifically:

1. the expansion of communications facilities (press, radio, films) to the provinces,
2. frequent and frank contact between the government and the press,
3. reflecting government operations (especially the National Assembly) via public media to the people,
4. improving the public relations techniques at the Presidency,
5. developing by means of public relations techniques a sense of "mutuality of interests" between the Army and the people,
6. maintaining public awareness of GVN economic development progress,
7. exposing the people to the fallacies of DRV propaganda in popular terms at the local level.

(2) Specific Task Concepts. Attached to Annex B is a detailed analysis of each counterinsurgency task required of the GVN to include purpose, scope, present situation, concept and implementation, with the exception of the required force increase, which is in Annex A.

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2. Editorial Note

General Lansdale visited Vietnam from January 2 to 14. On January 17, he reported on his trip in a memorandum to Secretary of Defense Gates, recommending: "The U.S. should recognize that Vietnam is in a critical condition and should treat it as a combat area of the cold war, as an area requiring emergency treatment." For text of the memorandum, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pages 1–12.

3. Summary Record of a Meeting, The White House, Washington, January 28, 1961, 10 a.m–12:15 p.m. [1]

PARTICIPANTS

The President
The Vice President
The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
General Lemnitzer, Chairman JCS
The Director of CIA—Mr. Allen Dulles
Assistant Secretary Nitze, Defense Department
Brigadier General Lansdale, USAF
Mr. Broe, CIA
Mr. Parsons, State Department

The President greeted General Lansdale and complimented him on his report on Viet-Nam. [2]

Secretary Rusk asked whether the President would prefer to consider this report first or have a briefing from Mr. Parsons on the Viet-Nam counter-insurgency plan [3] just submitted by the Country Team at Saigon.

Mr. Parsons then outlined the plan, saying that it comprehended not only military, but political, economic and psychological programs. Inspired originally by Defense, it was worked out by a group chaired in the Embassy with participants from MAAG, USOM, USIS and CIA. Apart from the recommendation for a 20,000-man increase in the Vietnamese army and accelerated training under MAAG of the 30,000-man civil guard, the plan recommended organizational changes in the Vietnamese Government having to do with security planning and execution, centralization of intelligence and other factors. The initial cost of the army and civil guard portions of the plan would be approximately $40 million chargeable to MAP in FY 61. Mr. Parsons said that the essence of the plan, including analysis of

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/1-2861. Secret. Drafted and initialed by Parsons. Although the source text indicates the meeting began at 11:45 a.m., according to the President's Log Book and Rusk's Appointment Book, the meeting began at 10 a.m., and Lansdale and Parsons did not join until 10:45. (Kennedy Library, President's Log Book; Johnson Library, Rusk Appointment Book) For another account of the meeting, see the memorandum from Rostow, *infra*. Parsons in his oral history interview incorrectly dates this meeting on January 21 or 22. (Kennedy Library, Oral History Program, J. Graham Parsons)

In a memorandum to Dulles, Rusk, and MacNamara, January 27, McGeorge Bundy reported that the meeting was called to discuss Cuba and Vietnam, the latter because of the President's "keen interest in General Lansdale's recent report and his awareness of the high importance of this country." (*Ibid.*, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series)

[2] See *supra*.

[3] Document 1.

the situation, assumptions, tasks and recommendations, was in a 20 page double-spaced prelude to the full text. He added that, as regards status of the plan in Washington, it had only just arrived, was elaborated in some 220 pages of detail and in the State Department had received initial approval only at the lower levels of the Far Eastern Bureau. It was probable that FE would recommend to the Secretary that all the main features should be implemented as speedily as possible. Mr. Parsons did not know its status in other Departments. He also mentioned that the Country Team believed that implementation of the military portions of the plan would enable the Vietnamese army to turn from the defensive to the offensive against the Viet Cong guerrillas.

The President remarked that if the situation in Viet-Nam was now so serious he wondered why the recruitment of troops and the training of police, who could become effective only a year or two hence, would be of any use. He also wondered why, if there were only 10,000 guerrillas, an increase from 150 to 170,000 in the army was necessary.

Mr. Parsons responded that it was the judgment of the people out there that this plan would be useful, that civil guard training was already under way, and that it should be borne in mind that the Vietnamese army had two tasks, first to provide a deterrent against conventional attack by the 300,000-man army of north Viet-Nam and, second, to combat widespread and determined insurgency over a large area which, of course, has elsewhere pinned down a much greater number of men.

In response to the President's invitation, General Lansdale spoke at some length along the lines of his report. He also said in reference to the counter-insurgency plan that it was written in the Defense Department and then sent out to Saigon for further consideration. He said that he had found that relations between the MAAG and CAS and President Diem were excellent and that the spirit of the MAAG and CAS people was constructive. Regrettably, it was otherwise in the Embassy and the Foreign Service people were defeatist and not as interested as they should be.

The President referred to General Lansdale's reference to the morale of President Diem and his belief that the Ambassador and others were not fully behind him and perhaps favored the coup d'etat rebels. He wondered if a letter or some gesture from the new administration would help. General Lansdale thought that something of this nature would help a great deal.

Secretary Rusk said that he had received a draft letter for the President to send in response to President Diem's congratulations.[4]

[4] Neither letter has been found.

and had sent it back for further redrafting with this morale problem in mind. It should reach the President shortly.

Mr. Allen Dulles emphasized the need for speed and for doing those things which would increase immediately the anti-guerrilla capability in Viet-Nam. With Mr. Broe he also mentioned the limited efforts being made to produce South Vietnamese guerrillas capable of harassing the north Vietnamese. Mr. Broe agreed with Mr. Parsons' remark that thus far the Vietnamese Government had not been very receptive to this program. He added that the teams which had been trained were being used in the contaminated areas of South Viet-Nam.

Secretary Rusk mentioned that Ambassador Durbrow and his staff had had a very difficult role to play over these past three and a half years. Mr. Durbrow had had the unpalatable task of balancing representations designed to persuade President Diem to undertake reforms and other tasks to improve the Vietnamese position against the need to assure him of our support and friendship. This was never easy nor was President Diem an easy person. He thought that the Ambassador had energetically and effectively done this but that it was now time for a change and he should be relieved in the near future.[5]

At the close of the meeting Secretary Rusk suggested, and the President agreed, that a task force should be set up similar to the one on Cuba to study at once and recommend soonest on the Country Team counter-insurgency plan.[6]

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[5] On January 25, Wood drafted a memorandum to this effect for the Secretary of State. It was cleared by Anderson, Cleveland, Parsons, and Steeves and sent through the Under Secretary of State for Administration. (Department of State, Vietnam Working Group Files, Lot 66 D 193, 1-C 2 Ambassador Durbrow, GVN 1961)

[6] As a result of this meeting, the President on January 30 authorized an increase of $28.4 million to expand the Vietnam force level by 20,000 and an expenditure of $12.7 million to improve the quality of the Vietnam Civil Guard. For text of the memorandum to the Secretaries of State and Defense authorizing the money, see *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, p. 13.

4. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) [1]

Washington, January 30, 1961

SUBJECT

Meeting Saturday Morning, January 28, in the President's Office, on Viet-Nam

1. This memorandum is designed for Mr. Bundy only. It aims to give more detail than should go into a memorandum for the record.

2. The President thanked General Lansdale for his memorandum [2] and stated it, for the first time, gave him a sense of the danger and urgency of the problem in Viet-Nam.

3. Mr. Parsons opened by describing the problems which had emerged out of joint work between Washington and the field for a plan to reverse the course of events in Viet-Nam. [3] Its elements are these:

a. An increase in the force levels from 150,000 to 170,000, involving additional cost to the U.S. of $28.4 million.

b. The proposal to improve, over two years, the quality of the civil guard, involving additional cost to the U.S. of $12.7 million.

It is hoped that these two measures, along with the measures set out below, would permit Viet-Nam to move from the defense to the offense.

c. It is proposed that there be an improved integration of civil and military resources in the Viet-Nam government, from the top to the village level, including a reduction (from the present level of 43) in the number of people reporting personally to Diem and an improvement in the executive quality of those below Diem.

d. The creation of a national planning system for the economy.

e. Increased centralization of governmental institutions.

f. An improved border and coastal patrol system.

g. Improved domestic communications.

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Top Secret. Initialed by Rostow, who attended the January 28 meeting, although not listed as a participant in Parsons' memorandum, *supra*.

[2] See Document 2. Although paragraph 2 suggests that the President had seen Lansdale's report, Rostow has stated that he gave it to him on February 2 at 3:40 p.m. When the President had read it, according to Rostow, he looked up and said, "This is the worst one we've got, isn't it?" You know, Eisenhower never uttered the word Vietnam." (National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-15-71, MS of Rostow book, Chapter 34, p. 531) Similar accounts of this meeting are also in Kennedy Library, Oral History Program, Walt W. Rostow, p. 44, and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days*, p. 320.

[3] Document 1.

h. It is believed the local costs of this program, aside from those suggested above, for the armed forces and the civil guard can be met by the Viet-Nam government without inflation. There is a twenty-page foreword to this plan, and we might wish to get hold of it.

4. The President then asked whether this order of magnitude of increase in the armed forces of Viet-Nam would really permit a shift from the defense to the offense. He asked whether the situation was not basically one of politics and morale.

5. It was explained that a very high proportion of total Viet-Nam forces was now pinned on the front facing a Viet Minh force of 300,000.

6. The President asked whether guerrilla forces could be mounted in the Viet Minh area. It was explained that Diem had shown thus far little taste for such operations. Mr. Dulles said that four teams of eight men each had been organized for harassment, that the CIA had other notions about offensive operations; but thus far these teams had been allocated to working on a series of guerrilla pockets in the south of the country, which had moved in over the Laos border. General Lansdale said that he was familiar with the plan, as was Diem. He said that any plan that could work would require that the Vietnamese themselves become fully engaged. Diem's view was that some parts of the American plan made sense, others would be very difficult. For example, he has been able to find only three men who could bear serious executive responsibility beneath him, only three men who could make tough decisions and not simply buck them upward to himself. He also said that he believed an increment of 20,000 men to the armed forces could significantly affect the margin in the field available for counter-guerrilla operations. The Communists had just begun serious political work in the field. Their objective was to organize some kind of political front capable of bringing Diem down, which they could dominate.

7. The President asked what his estimate of the prospects was. Lansdale replied that the Communists regard 1961 as their big year. He believed that a maximum American effort could frustrate a definitive effort in 1961 and move over into the offensive in 1962. The essentials were three: first, the Americans in Viet-Nam must themselves be infused with high morale and a will to win, and they must get close to the Vietnamese; secondly, the Vietnamese must, in this setting, be moved to act with vigor and confidence; third, Diem must be persuaded to let the opposition coalesce in some legitimate form rather than concentrate on the task of killing him. It was Diem's view that there are Americans in the Foreign Service who are very close to those who tried to kill him on November 11. Lansdale found it impossible to dissuade him that this was a fact. Diem felt confidence in the Americans in the CIA and the MAAG. He had

tried to persuade Diem to appoint his brother to an executive position out in the open; but Diem apparently needed the confidence of his brother's advice, given at night and in the early morning; Diem did not believe his brother had executive competence; and the loss of his brother—perhaps in an ambassadorship—would be a traumatic experience for Diem.

8. Lansdale said that if Laos goes to the Communists, we might not have time to organize the turn-around required in American and Viet-Nam morale and action.

9. Mr. Dulles described the recent increase in the number of transmission stations used by the Communists to instruct the guerrillas in Viet-Nam, an increase from 11 to 29. He advocated a quick beefup of counter-guerrilla forces before the 20,000 increment was organized. He advocated a review within our government of training of foreign guerrillas, a program for which there was no clear-cut line of authority. He said the MAAG organization was excellent but had no adequate provision for para-military forces. There was no clear authority in Washington, the funding problem was not clear; and the CIA was properly confined to the training of the FBI-type men to seek out and identify dangerous Communists.

10. The President again stated he wants guerrillas to operate in the north and asked what the situation there was. Mr. Dulles replied the people were unhappy and that the government was strong. The military forces consisted of over a quarter of a million men. Moscow had its men in the government bureaus, but the Chinese Communists were more widely spread about in Viet Minh territory.

11. Mr. Rusk explained that the diplomats in Viet-Nam face an extremely frustrating task. They were caught between pressing Diem to do things he did not wish to do and the need to convey to him American support. It was a difficult balance to strike, and Diem was extremely sensitive to criticism.

12. The President asked whether he should write to Diem. Mr. Rusk said this would be a good idea, as part of a new approach by the new Ambassador. It was agreed there would be an early Presidential statement backing the effort in Viet-Nam. The President asked how do we change morale, how do we get operations in the north; how do we get moving? It was replied that the funding problem would be difficult. The emergency fund was low. We already had $41,000,000 committed to Viet-Nam and $30,000,000 committed to Laos. The President expressed in the meeting, as he expressed to me personally, his desire to be fully informed with respect to the emergency fund. He wishes a Viet-Nam task force set up like the Cuba task force. The question of whether General Lansdale or Mr. Kenneth Young should go to Viet-Nam as the new ambassador, was considered.

13. The President said that he wanted Mr. Bundy to make sure to get prompt action on the question of personal responsibility in Washington for the four crises areas: Viet-Nam, Congo, Laos, and Cuba. The President said we must change our course in these areas and we must be better off in three months than we are now.

14. In a conversation after the meeting with Mr. McNamara, Mr. Rusk and myself, Mr. Rusk expressed some anxiety that the development of these task forces might obtrude on the normal workings of the government. Mr. McNamara said he understood this, but for crisis situations such measures would have to be accepted.

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5. Notes on a Meeting Between the Secretary of State and the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Parsons), Washington, January 28, 1961, 6:47 p.m. [1]

JGP. *Personalities* Lansdale = Col. Hillandale.[2] Able performance in Manila. Close to Diem. Lone wolf and operator. Tagged as operator. Flamboyant.

Secy: How tagged?

. . . . . .

JGP: Not a team player. Has resented attitudes other Americans particularly FS.[3] Durbie. Tired. Shld be removed. Ladejinsky. Able, sensitive, close to Diem, about to quit. Tried to interest Diem in ordinary people. Durbie has gone pretty far on same line even recommending Nhus and Can Lao. This about ended his influence. Re unsuccessful coup d'etat, Durbie probably saved D's life indirectly. Also kept Diem from being too punitive. Some of his messages on this misinterpreted by Lemnitzer and DOD and played up too much. Thus military antipathy to Durbie.

Secy: Does Diem feel Durbie doublecrossed him?

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[1] Source: Department of State, Vietnam Working Group Files: Lot 66 D 193, 20 General Lansdale, V-N 1961. Secret. Drafted by Wood. The source text is Wood's handwritten notes.

[2] Colonel Hillandale, an American intelligence operative in the novel *The Ugly American* by Burdick and Lederer.

[3] Foreign Service.

JGP: To some extent. We pushed so hard for liberalization [and failed][4] that Diem may think we went over to the other side to get more liberal regime. Trouble in VN is monologue. Diem has again shown his courage and coolness during coup attempt.

Lansdale memo.[5] Jibes generally with our views. Much emphasis on what US should [do], little emphasis on what GVN should do.

It recommends we intensify support of Diem. We agree he needs help, inspiration and encouragement.

Recommends opposition party guided by U.S. We think unwise.

Secy: Is situation in VN soon to be critical?

JGP: It is near critical. Not hopeless. Diem best fellow.

Secy: Is Diem unpopular?

CBW: He is respected, not popular. Respect has weakened.

Secy: Geneva Accords limitation?

JGP: Amounts, kinds of weapons, numbers our people (MAAG).

Secy: There is an ICC?

JGP: Yes, they have failed in three ways. Kontum, insurgency,[6] transit USSR aircraft.

Counterinsurgency plan looks like good way mobilize GVN resources.

Secy: Where does it stand?

CBW: Awaiting DOD recommendation, being studied here.

JGP: Recently received.

Re Durbrow—should he and McGarr. They sometimes differ, but there are understandable differences.

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[4] All brackets in the source text.

[5] See Document 2.

[6] On November 10, 1960, the Republic of Vietnam reported to the ICC that Communist attacks during October in Kontum province involved regular North Vietnam troops and constituted open aggression.

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6. Letter From the Secretary of Defense's Deputy Assistant for Special Operations (Lansdale) to President Diem[1]

Washington, January 30, 1961.

DEAR FRIEND: Your thoughtful kindness made the trip to Vietnam a most interesting and memorable one for me. I was happy to see you looking so well, despite the many problems you face every

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[1] Source: Hoover Institution, Lansdale Papers, Chron File, D.

day, and it was a real pleasure to have had visits with you. So, thank you for all your help, for letting Nguyen Dinh Thuan go along on the 5th Military Region trip, and for the sandwiches you sent along! I know that Joe Redick would want to join me in expressing appreciation, too.

On the way home, I stopped in Hawaii for a visit at CINCPAC. I had good talks with Admiral Felt and his staff. I called attention to the grave dangers of the current Viet Cong threat and the need for some extra attention by the U.S. He was extremely interested and, although understandably engaged with urgent duties concerning Laos, put some of his staff to work promptly on your problems. I understand that he sent General Thiemer out for a visit.

In Washington, Secretary Gates and Deputy Secretary Douglas of Defense were most receptive to my report.[2] Douglas in particular called it to the attention of our top people at the White House and State Department. When the new Administration took office, Douglas went to considerable lengths to make our new leaders aware of the situation. He is a very staunch friend. Allen Dulles, also, has been most helpful. General Lemnitzer and Admiral Burke had been instrumental in getting me out on the trip and have taken great interest in what I reported.

The new Defense leaders (Secretary McNamara, Deputy Secretary Gilpatric, and Paul Nitze the new Assistant Secretary for ISA) all had me in for talks with them about your problems. Then, last Saturday, President Kennedy had me in for a long talk on the subject.[3] He was warmly interested and asked many questions. I am sure that you can count upon him as an understanding friend and that you will be hearing further about this. It would have "warmed your heart" to have heard this conversation. So, you see, you do have some sincere friends in Washington.

However, there will be some here who will point out that much of the danger of your present situation comes about from your own actions. They say that you try to do too many things yourself, that you refuse to give real responsibility to others and keep interfering with what they do, that you feel you are infallible personally, and that too many of your organizations like the Republican Youth Corps and the Can Lao Party are actually formed by coercion—that is, people join because they are afraid not to—rather than being genuine organizations rooted in the hearts of the Vietnamese people. I believe there will be many of these criticisms voiced in private talks here as word gets around about favorable reactions to my report.

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[2] See Document 2.
[3] See Documents 3 and 4.

The best answer to these criticisms would be actions by you in Vietnam. The critics would then have to close their mouths in the face of your actions. One action would be for you to announce your reorganization of the government very soon. Also, you could make your Security Council become alive and dynamic. Please remember my suggestion: call the military commanders and province chiefs in from the 1st and 5th Military Regions—to meet with the Security Council. You could make a talk to this group, and broadcast it all over Vietnam to all of the people of Vietnam. Your country needs you to rouse spirits right now, the way Winston Churchill did for Britain at a dark hour. Your countrymen need to be told that Vietnam is in grave danger from the Communists, that the help of every citizen is welcomed by the government, and that Vietnam must and will be kept free and independent.

After your talk to this group, it would be smart to turn the meeting over to Vice President Tho or Secretary Thuan. The meeting should be a secret one. I believe that each province chief, each responsible military commander, and the regional delegues, should report openly and frankly on the problems they have in their own areas. You did this once before, in February 1955, and it was a very wise and healthy action. You will hear many things, not only bad problems but also good ideas. So will all of those at such a meeting.

It would help you very much if you could include some of the Americans who are trying to help you—let them attend this meeting and take notes. You can invite those you believe to be sincere. They, too, would learn a lot and would become more realistic in their work in Vietnam. I would include McGarr and Colby.

Now, the political opposition to you worries me greatly. I have thought about it for many hours and days since leaving Vietnam. There is much ugly talk and bad feeling among many people in Saigon. It is so ugly and bad that I am afraid it will prompt some thoughtless persons to attempt another coup. You are one of the great leaders of the Free World and a friend for whom I have deep affection. So, please take my words in the friendship with which they are offered.

Simply suppressing this political feeling of opposition by arresting people or closing down newspapers will only turn the talk into deep emotions of hatred and generate the formation of more clandestine organizations and plots to oppose you. This is so far from your real nature and your gifted talents of leadership that I know you are seeking a better solution.

An idea suggests itself for your consideration of this problem of the political opposition. If you could get most of the oppositionists working on a program of specific ideas to save the nation, and to work on this program freely among themselves outside of the

government, you would turn the major share of their political energies into constructive work. They would argue among themselves over their ideas, trying to get each other to accept these ideas, rather than spend their political energies attacking you.

How do you do this? Perhaps you yourself cannot. But, you are the only person who can set the proper political climate for such an action. It needs you to tell the people, including the oppositionists, that Vietnam is in grave danger. It needs you to remove the lurking fear of secret arrest at night as punishment for political activity; whether such fears are based on fact or falsehood, the point is that many people believe that special police under Dr. Tuyen make political arrests at night, with the knowledge of your brother Nhu.

Perhaps the wisest move would be to call in the younger people among the opposition. It would be best if you talked to them personally. You might tell them that Vietnam stands to lose its freedom, that all Vietnamese must go to work now to save that freedom, that you know the oppositionists have not agreed with all your programs but that running a government which is under savage Communist attack is not as simple as critics apparently think. You want people not to merely criticize their government. If they believe they have good ideas, they should write these down and agree to a program they believe would save the country. Not a Communist program, but a program by Free Vietnamese. If they go to work to write and agree upon such a program, you can assure them that you won't stand in their way—even if it means the formation of a strong, *single* opposition party.

You might talk to them, too, the way you did to me in 1955 and 1956—that your dream for Vietnam was to have two strong political parties. You might point out that you called the younger people in from the opposition groups because they are the ones who have to build the future. They will live in it. Too many of the older politicians are living in the past or are selfishly looking for power for themselves.

Well, this became a very long letter. My suggestions were prompted by the fact that many people in Washington, just like many people in Asia, are watching you right now to see what you will do next. I am sure that whatever you do, you will do it resolutely and with wisdom. I will help to the extent that an American official can.

With warmest and best personal wishes, as always.
Sincerely,

Edward G. Lansdale [4]
Brigadier General, USAF

[4] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

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7. Remarks by the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (McGarr), Saigon, January 30, 1961 [1]

GENTLEMEN: This Senior Advisors meeting has been called to discuss our mutual problems, bring you up-to-date, and refine our Better Automobile, or Tactics and Techniques paper.[2] With the rapid turn-over we have here in Vietnam, you'll notice many new faces today that were not with us in November and I want you all to make it a point to get acquainted. In this respect, I am sorry the operational situation and the wide dispersal of advisory detachments prevents more frequent meetings. Therefore, let's all take maximum advantage of this opportunity to exchange ideas among each other and with the members of my staff.

Before proceeding with the meeting proper, I wish to take this opportunity to clarify and reemphasize the official U.S. and MAAG position toward the GVN and President Diem.

Here in Saigon, in particular, as well as in the Provinces where you are stationed, you have heard many rumors and statements about the GVN and President Diem. These run the gamut from corruption of governmental officials, to nepotism, favoritism, political dogmatism, undue interference by Diem in military matters, and normally end with the statement or implication, that Diem "must go" if the country is to be saved.

These rumors and statements are normally instigated by dissatisfied politicians, misled intellectuals, Communists or certain elements of the foreign community. Human nature being what it is, these rumors are, unfortunately, picked up, repeated and elaborated

[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 334, MAAG/Vietnam Files FRC 64 A 2424, 250/17 Emergency Planning Files. Secret. No drafting information is given on the source text. The remarks were made by General McGarr at a meeting with his senior advisers.

[2] Not further identified.

upon by certain elements of the U.S. community here in Vietnam and by certain well meaning Vietnamese officers and civilians.

Although there may possibly be some degree of validity to some of these rumors—there always is—they are mostly based on the Communist technique of half truths and insinuations and are not supported by hard facts. It has been my observation over a period of years that our Armed Forces are not entirely immune to this questionable pastime. I am convinced that the best defense against rumor is truth. With this in mind, the U.S. policy towards the GVN and President Diem is clear and unequivocal. Briefly stated, it is that the U.S. supports the GVN and President Diem. That although Diem has certain shortcomings, as do we all, he is pro-U.S., definitely anti-Communist, and has done a remarkably fine job during his five years in office against terrific odds. He is the most tough minded, dedicated practicing anti-Communist leader among our friends today.

Therefore, it is only fair that all personnel of this MAAG refrain from giving credence—tacit or openly—to these unfavorable rumors regarding President Diem and the GVN. Remember that they cannot be proven—and that there is definitely less corruption in the GVN than most similar countries. Diem will not countenance it!

[Here follow five pages of text reviewing the activities of MAAG since November 1960.]

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8. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, January 31, 1961—7 p.m.

1329. In view of General Lansdale's experience in Viet-Nam, I have given considerable attention and thought to the suggestions he made in CINCPAC 172157Z January, [2] and I have discussed these with key members of my staff. I fully agree with his evaluation,

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/1-3161. Secret; Limit Distribution. According to another copy, this telegram was drafted by Durbrow. (Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878) Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] In this telegram, Lansdale concluded that the opposition groups in Saigon appeared to be so close to explosion that a coup attempt might soon follow. He suggested two U.S. actions to forestall this possibility and the resulting chaos: 1) a clear statement of U.S. support for Diem and 2) U.S. encouragement of the opposition to form a responsible party. (*Ibid.*, Internal Security, 1961)

about the critical threat imposed by VC as well as potentially explosive nature of non-Communist position problem.

1. His suggestion US make clear statement support Diem is, under appropriate circumstances, worth frequent reiteration especially in light of recent critical US press comment which have tended encourage activities of all elements completely disunited and disorganized non-Communist opposition, most of whom erroneously seem believe institution full democratic procedures Viet-Nam main thing needed to eliminate Communist threat. We have in the past on appropriate occasions restated our support for Diem, the last time being in a letter from President Eisenhower October 26th.[3]

While message indicating continued American support for development of Viet-Nam toward economic independence and political democracy under Diem from new US administration would be highly appropriate, two facts make any more pointed statement of support at this time dubious:

(a) Since Diem will undoubtedly be candidate for re-election during next two months, any pointed statement backing Diem personally and fully would give impression US taking sides and bringing undue influence in electoral campaign which we hope will be as genuine as circumstances will permit;

(b) We have devoted considerable effort pressing Diem to adopt certain needed liberalizing reforms and changes in GVN methods and structure which we believe he should adopt in his own interests in order to win further popular support vitally needed in face of growing VC military and political threat. While we have been told that many of our suggestions are under active consideration, considerable time has been lost since November attempted coup with little action taken. Therefore at this juncture strong public reiteration US support toward Diem personally might further convince him that we have no alternative but to support him no matter what he does. Such statement, therefore, might induce him further to procrastinate from taking necessary actions which I am convinced he must do to reverse present adverse trends and diminish VC threat.

I recommend, therefore, that any assertion of US support be limited at this time to a greeting by President Kennedy and appropriate general reference to Diem's strong anti-Communist stand and the economic development and progress which has taken place in the past five years.

2. While the ideal of a two-party system with a constitutional opposition should be our long-range goal for Viet-Nam, I have considerable reservation as to the possibility of accomplishing this in the near future or of the practicality and desirability of actively pressing for it at this time. The Vietnamese people lack the neces-

[3] For text of Eisenhower's message, dated October 22, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1960–1961*, pp. 807–808.

sary sophistication and understanding, as well as the necessary sense of political responsibility to make a two-party democratic system work at this time. Furthermore, and more important, one key element of Vietnamese scene is lack of any hopes of opposition leadership or any distinction in diverse oppositionists' minds between a constitutional and unconstitutional opposition. Furthermore none has any clearcut realistic program to offer. Thus any effort on our part to try to unite the heterogenous non-Communist opposition elements into a cohesive loyal opposition would not only be most difficult if not impossible but might easily develop into real effort to unseat Diem, independent of any constitutional niceties, in a mistaken belief US desires replace Diem. Furthermore, in light of the current, most serious VC threat, any such effort on our part would be considered by Diem as mortal blow to his regime and would negate any encouraging official statements we might make. Moreover, such US effort would tend to drive Diem further to count on use of force only to win battle against VC and almost guarantee that he would take or implement few if any of the essential steps we have urged him to take in his own interests. Diem already is of strong belief that US does not understand or appreciate the problems of a newly-independent country, half-occupied by Communists, and that we tend to think, despite realities of situation, that adoption of full democratic procedures will win day.

3. Therefore I am firmly convinced that:

(a) We must do all we can to induce Diem to adopt, as many as practicable under the circumstances, liberal procedures and reforms which will plant the seeds of democracy and eventually create a solid enough base on which to build still further democratic institutions. These procedures should include safety valves for non-Communist opposition elements to make constructive criticism. These procedures cannot, however, be done overnight in a split country facing a most serious Communist internal threat.

(b) In view of the heterogenous nature, lack of program and emotional nature of most non-Communist opposition elements, we should use all our influence overtly and covertly to make it clear to opposition groups that:

(1) Any effort on their part to pull coup at this time would bring about such confusion and perhaps chaos that chances of a Communist take-over would be greatly enhanced if not guaranteed;

(2) It in their interests to remain within constitutional limits, and urge constructive programs and reforms which they should encourage Diem to adopt in order to liberalize his regime as much as present circumstances will permit.

4. In this connection, I have already instructed all key members of various agency staffs here to adopt positive instead of defeatist

attitude in discussions with GVN and opposition elements and instructed them to make clear that we oppose any coup which would only enhance prospects of Communist takeover. Furthermore, I have emphasized that all GVN elements should be urged to work together constructively in order put up united front against VC, while at same time urging Diem and his close collaborators to introduce more liberal and constructive procedures. I sincerely believe that with this approach, and with the maximum of US help as outlined in the counterinsurgency plan [4] we can gradually overcome the Communist subversive threat, although if Diem insists on refusing to take the positive steps he is considering, Diem's prestige will lose further ground and his survival will be problematical.

Department also pass General Lansdale.

Durbrow

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[4] Document 1

II. UNITED STATES EFFORTS TO OBTAIN SOUTH VIETNAMESE ACCEPTANCE OF THE BASIC COUNTERINSURGENCY PLAN, FEBRUARY–APRIL

9. National Security Action Memorandum No. 12 [1]

Washington, February 6, 1961.

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL LEMNITZER

Is it possible for us to distribute the available forces we now have in Vietnam more effectively in order to increase the effectiveness of anti-guerilla activities. Are there troops stationed along the border who could be made available for this activity? It is my recollection that the Vietnam army now numbers 150,000, and that we are planning to add 20,000 more, making a total of 170,000. Reports are that the guerillas number from 7,000 to 15,000. I would think that the redistribution of available forces immediately would make them more effective in this work and we would not have to wait for action during the training period of the new troops. Would you give me your judgment on this when next we meet?

[1] Source: Department of State, S/S–NSC Files: Lot 72 D 316, NSAMs. Presumably the memorandum is from the President.

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10. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, February 8, 1961—6 p.m.

1351. Embassy telegrams 1348 and 1349. [2] Following are my initial comments on broad program of reforms announced by President Diem at full dress press conference February 6.

Importance Diem attached to matter shown by facts appeared for first time before both foreign and Vietnamese press, made

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/2–861. Confidential. Repeated to Phnom Penh, Bangkok, Singapore, Vientiane, CINCPAC for PolAd, London, and Paris.

[2] On February 6, Diem held a press conference to announce a series of reforms aimed at decentralizing governmental powers, improving democratic institutions and village administration, and encouraging private citizens and groups to contribute to governmental activities. Telegram 1348, February 7, transmitted a summary of the reforms and the text of a statement made by Thuan at the press conference. (*Ibid.*, 851K.00/2–761) Telegram 1349, of the same date, transmitted the texts of questions asked of and answered by Diem following Thuan's statement. (*Ibid.*, 751K.00/2–761)

statement, answered questions on variety subjects. Answers to questions straight-forward and helpful. After conference Diem did good public relations job, joking with correspondents in relaxed manner.

Not surprisingly, reforms announced have number of positive and negative aspects, but tone as whole is encouraging. With enough time to work them out in detail, and if Diem grants more authority to Department heads as he said he would, result should be improved functioning of GVN.

Reforms clearly go considerably beyond more modest and hesitant list of changes reported in G–309.[3] Most encouraging aspects include following: (1) General tone is forward-looking, and reforms clearly product of prolonged reflection and discussion on part of President and most progressive elements in GVN; (2) Emphasis is wisely placed on improved administration of functioning programs through better coordination of existing agencies, thus making use of momentum already gained and avoiding personnel problems that more radical change would have entailed; (3) Movement into some new fields such as elected youth member of village councils (for youth and information matters) and establishment of councils at national level to promote economic, social, and cultural activity; (4) Some decentralization of power from provincial down to municipal and village levels.

Notably lacking were political changes of an impact nature or any immediate concessions of democratic freedoms except election youth representative. Diem's answers this connection might have shown more finesse, particularly on village council elections, but he did admit frankly that because of security situation it not possible permit general village elections this time.

GVN had already begun moving to implement several points in President's program prior to press conference. . . . told me evening February 6 special session of Assembly will begin consideration laws on National Economic Council, National Cultural-Social Council and Superior Council of Judiciary February 7. (Assembly Commission had met February 5 to consider draft law on National Economic Council.)

Program Diem announced February 6 is substantial, forward-looking and, if properly implemented, should provide solid base to build on. While he has been slow in acting, the steps he has taken are in the direction we have been urging.

Durbrow

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[3] Not printed. (*Ibid.*, 751K.00/1–3061)

11. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, February 13, 1961—7 p.m.

1367. Accompanied by General McGarr and General Isaac D. White [2] who here on farewell visit, I gave Diem thirteenth an abridged version counter-insurgency plan under cover of letter which underlined most significant points contained Deptel 1054. [3] Thuan also present during hour forty-five minute talk.

After reading letter, Diem and Thuan expressed concern as to how they could finance piaster costs for twenty thousand additional men. I told them plan included concrete suggestions how this could be accomplished and expressed firm conviction that by taking extraordinary measures GVN could raise sufficient piasters. Thuan stated Ford Foundation financial group here had just recently expressed some doubt as to how GVN could raise more piasters in near future. I replied I hoped our suggestions would help them find solution. Diem then spoke some length about extraordinary expenses he is faced with backing planned road along Cambodian border from Gulf of Siam, road in Tay Ninh area and costs of many other essential projects. He then stated he needed at least 5,000 more troops immediately to help guard construction gangs, for instance those to complete Kontum-Tourane road, new industries being built, as well as to give more protection to population. Thuan asked what our position would be if, for instance, GVN could not see way to finance plan as whole. I replied plan is comprehensive document and therefore all facets should basically be carried out although our position not inflexible and we ready work up agreed plan.

Diem then outlined Communist plans to disrupt election which he learned from captured documents. Communists have two plans: (1) To prevent people from voting in elections, or (2) to try to induce enough people to vote for weakest presidential candidate so as to establish weak government in south Viet-Nam which would be easy prey to Communists later. According Diem, reasons Communists less active on terrorist front January was because they have regrouped their cadres to indoctrinate them on how to disrupt elections and train others to carry out phase two of Communist plan,

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/2-1361. Secret. Repeated to Phnom Penh, Bangkok, Vientiane, London, Paris, and CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Commander in Chief, U.S. Army, Pacific.

[3] For text, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pp. 14–16. Copies of the 3-page letter and 12-page summary were transmitted as enclosures to despatch 351 from Saigon, February 14. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/2-1461) For text of the Basic Counterinsurgency Plan for Vietnam, see Document 1.

i.e., cause riots, demonstrations and bombings in cities. He stated Communists will try some bombing during Tet. Because of this he has to deploy large number present security forces around Saigon to thwart Communist's plan. Diem's remarks added up to: His piaster expenses are extraordinarily high and he does not know where he can get more; and he needs more troops immediately to give protection to installations and people and prevent Communists from disruption elections.

We discussed RKG–GVN relations for about forty minutes (reported separately [4]).

Comment: Thuan promised to study plan carefully and discuss it with us soonest. Letter proposes agreed plan between US and GVN be worked by end of February but I am not very sanguine GVN will move that fast. Copies abridged plan and letter by pouch.

Durbrow

[4] In telegram 1360, February 13, Durbrow reported that he had stressed to Diem that the new administration hoped relations between Cambodia and South Vietnam would improve. (Department of State, Central Files, 651H.51K/2–1361)

12. Memorandum of a Conversation Between the Under Secretary of State (Bowles) and the Vietnamese Ambassador (Chuong), Department of State, Washington, February 13, 1961 [1]

SUBJECT

Viet-Nam

Secretary Bowles recalled that he had visited Viet-Nam six or seven years ago. He hoped he would again be able to visit Viet-Nam. He had met the then Prime Minister, Nguyen Van Tham, who had seen the necessity of giving the people of Viet-Nam reforms and more freedom. Ambassador Chuong recalled that Tham had good ideas, but had lacked courage. Secretary Bowles agreed. Ambassador Chuong emphasized that President Diem, by contrast, had had

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/2–1361. Confidential. Drafted by Wood on February 15 and approved in U on February 17. A summary of the conversation was transmitted to Saigon in telegram 1088, February 15. (*Ibid.*, 790.00/2–1561) A briefing memorandum for the meeting by Parsons, February 13, is *ibid.*, Vietnam Task Force Files: Lot 66 D 193, 16 USA.GVN 1961

enough courage to tell the French that complete independence was necessary for Viet-Nam. Secretary Bowles then mentioned the Communist tactic of distributing land to the landless and emphasized how important it was to provide land for the peasants. Ambassador Chuong mentioned that in some cases where this was done too rapidly the peasants found themselves with insufficient land, livestock and tools. Secretary Bowles agreed that land reform had to be well-planned and then mentioned the success of such programs in Thailand and Japan. He also mentioned the effectiveness of the Indian Civil Service whose people, although not originally trained for agriculture, were such good administrators that they were now able to supply Rural Extension Service to about 70% of India. He then spoke warmly of Wolf Ladejinsky's role in the land reform program of Japan. Ambassador Chuong recalled that Mr. Ladejinsky was now working for the Government of Viet-Nam.

Secretary Bowles said that in his view, the peasants not only wanted more material things but also a sense of justice and of participation in the government.

Ambassador Chuong asked if the Under Secretary would give him specific comments on the present situation. Secretary Bowles said that it was certainly necessary to be extremely firm with the Russian and Chinese Communists, but at the same time, military power was not enough. Ambassador Chuong commented that French failures had certainly proved that point. Secretary Bowles continued that we wished to bring the people of Southeast Asia together so that they would have a sense of common destiny. This was not easy. They had traditional differences, but our aim was to help these people to be confident in their own future rather than to be grateful to the United States. He cited the analogy of the British who in the 19th century through the protection of their fleet made it possible for the United States to grow into a strong country. It would seem that the main ingredients needed domestically within the countries of Southeast Asia were justice and more equality.

As to our relations with Viet-Nam, the Secretary emphasized we would certainly continue our support and live up to our treaty obligations. It would also be found that there would be a greater emphasis on looking further ahead and on long-range projects such as the Mekong Valley.

Ambassador Chuong agreed on the necessity of closer cooperation among the nations of Southeast Asia, continued cooperation with the United States and a greater sense of participation amongst the Vietnamese people.

Secretary Bowles said that if such a spirit could be built up, there would no longer be the feeling that the Viet Cong were aiming

their attacks against the United States, but rather that they were attacking the future of the Vietnamese people themselves.

Ambassador Chuong, referring to Laos and Viet-Nam, said that a war situation existed and that Asia was terribly weak in terms of defending itself. Thus in planning for the future of Asia it should be remembered that free Asia must sail with the wind. Mr. Bowles suggested that it was also possible to tack into the wind.

Ambassador Chuong mentioned the usefulness of the Civil Guard and the fact that the Government of Viet-Nam paid for its support.

Secretary Bowles inquired how much taxes the Vietnamese Government collected. Ambassador Chuong talked rapidly, replying that good taxes required good production.

Mr. Bowles spoke of the importance of strengthening SEATO and said that Secretary Rusk was planning to attend the Council Meeting on March 27. Ambassador Chuong asked if the Secretary might consider stopping off at Saigon. Mr. Bowles made it clear that the Secretary would even have difficulty in finding the time to visit Bangkok.

As the Ambassador took his leave, Mr. Bowles again stated that the United States would continue to support the Government of Viet-Nam.

13. Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, Washington, February 21, 1961 [1]

SUBJECT

Viet-Nam—Discussion with the British

PARTICIPANTS

Lord Hood
Mr. Dennis Greenhill, Counselor, British Embassy
Mr. C.D. Wiggin, First Secretary, British Embassy
Mr. J.B. Denson, First Secretary, British Embassy

Mr. Ivan B. White, Deputy Asst. Secretary for European Affairs
Mr. William C. Burdett, Jr., Director, BNA
Mr. James D. Moffett, BNA
Mr. Chalmers B. Wood, Officer in Charge, Viet-Nam Affairs

Lord Hood felt that it would be worth discussing the present tensions and threats which existed in Viet-Nam. Mr. White requested Mr. Wood to give our views briefly.

After stating that the nadir might have been passed during the last month or two, Mr. Wood spoke of the repeated suggestions which Ambassador Durbrow had made on the subject of liberalization, indicating that while the Vietnamese were well aware of our views, we would continue to keep this subject alive. However, there was some feeling that certain Western observers, especially newspapermen, tended to over-stress the question of liberalizing the regime. There were other illiberal regimes in Asia. While it was perhaps more important for President Diem to establish a better "dialogue" with his people, the main problem in Viet-Nam appeared to be the Communist threat. As to liberalization, we had noted some responsiveness on President Diem's part; the National Assembly was playing a somewhat greater role and the press occasionally gave voice to cautious criticism.

As to security, we had recently put forward to the Vietnamese Government a plan [2] which had been carefully worked out by our various specialists and had been approved in Washington at a very high level. In general this plan called for certain changes in the Vietnamese Government which would increase its efficiency in dealing with the Communists and envisaged increasing the Vietnamese armed forces by 20,000 men. Certain parts of the plan had already

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/2-2161. Secret. Drafted by Wood and initialed by White. A summary of the conversation was transmitted to Saigon in telegram 1106, February 24. (*Ibid.*, 751K.00-2-2461) A briefing memorandum for the meeting, dated February 15, is *ibid.*, Vietnam Task Force Files: Lot 66 D 193, 1-A.2 Briefing Papers, GVN 1961.

[2] Document 1.

been adopted, such as our training program for the Civil Guard. We had recently explained this plan to President Diem.[3] In addition to requiring a great deal of cooperation on both sides, it would also cost the Vietnamese a good deal of their own money. We felt that their economy was capable of meeting these additional expenses. President Diem had not been sure of this when the plan was explained to him. For the present the plan was being studied by the Vietnamese Government. It did not seem profitable to go into detail on the plan until agreement had been reached with the Vietnamese.

We had been pleased by President Diem's press conference of February 6,[4] particularly as this appeared to be the first time in which he had been willing to engage in questions and answers with the correspondents. We hoped that this custom would continue and that Diem could also be persuaded to make at least occasional informal radio talks. It seemed to us that this might provide an area where our Ambassadors in Saigon could work together.

The substance of Diem's public appearance on the 6th had also been encouraging since it showed that he was seeking to increase the coordination and efficiency of his government and to increase the participation of various groups such as the peasants (demonstrated by his plans for electing youths to village councils and the eventual creation of district and village councils) as well as by the creation of councils which were designed to attract the intellectuals and the businessmen.

Finally, in terms of Diem's security, we felt it essential for him to seek some improvement in his relations with Prince Sihanouk in order to achieve at least a minimum of border control. Here again there might be room for joint efforts between the American, British and French Ambassadors in Saigon and possibly in Phnom Penh. We felt such efforts could best be arranged in the field.

Lord Hood expressed his government's interest in the counterinsurgency plan and indicated that the British, on the basis of their Malayan experience, hoped to be able to cooperate. They would appreciate receiving fuller information on the plan. It was indicated that we would give them more on this as the situation developed.

Lord Hood felt in general that their own appreciation of the over-all situation in Viet-Nam was somewhat more pessimistic than ours, but he was inclined to agree that Diem was at last taking some realistic steps to meet the problems he faced. He agreed that there might well be room for coordination in attempting to persuade President Diem to be more communicative and in encouraging him to improve his relations with Cambodia.

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[3] See Document 11.
[4] See Document 10.

14. Editorial Note

On February 24, Wolf Ladejinsky wrote a 7-page letter to Walt Rostow covering the political and economic situations in light of the Communist threat. He concluded, "everything must be brought into play to insure the survival of Vietnam." (Kennedy Library, President's Office File, Staff Memoranda, Rostow)

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15. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, February 28, 1961—7 p.m.

1414. Joint Embassy–USOM–MAAG message. Our 1391.[2] GVN SecState for Presidency Thuan given briefing on military aspects Counterinsurgency Plan Feb 27 in response his request. Political, psychological, and economic aspects of plan not included since Thuan indicated he understood those aspects but Emb and USOM representatives present to answer questions in those fields. During briefing and as result suggestion that discussion be opened on procedure for reaching agreement between two govts on plan, Thuan expressed views re certain aspect of plan.

On military aspects Thuan said:

1. He in general agrees with recommended organizational changes in DOD and has already initiated action to study these. Specifically change of director of personnel into manpower directorate with shift of operational management to JCS is being studied. Also consolidation of signal services with signal command in ARVN is under study. He stated he sees no problem in consolidating Navy and AF technical service directorate within Navy and AF HQS respectively.

2. With regard to consolidation of Engineer Command Services Thuan expressed considerable doubt. He fears that placing of responsibility in one man for expenditure of largest portion of military

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5–MSP/2–2861. Confidential. Repeated to Phnom Penh, Bangkok, Vientiane, London, Paris, and CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Telegram 1391, February 22, reported that in a meeting with Thuan, Durbrow stressed the need to discuss the counterinsurgency plan and work out an agreed program of action. Thuan replied that he and other Vietnamese officials had not yet had a chance to study the plan carefully. (*Ibid.*, 751K.5–MSP/2–2261)

budget (other than pay and food) is not proper. He stated frankly temptations are too great. This problem is being studied.

3. The recommendation that certain powers of Director of Administration, Budget and Accounting be decentralized to Joint General Staff, Thuan expressed concern that military do not have qualified personnel to assume operational phases of financial and budgeting matters.

4. In discussing the requirement for some type of JGS reorganization which would establish centralized operational control for counterinsurgency, Thuan asked about relationship between a junior general, as Chief of Staff, with a senior general, as Chief of Operations Division, or Chief of Field Command. Thuan appeared to understand US Command relationship (chief of staff acting only for his chief) but feared it could not be applied to personalities in RVNAF.

5. Thuan expressed considerable concern over the government's inability to control inland waterways in south. He was particularly worried about minor canals which lead to major waterways. MAAG concept of area control, securing an area from VC then moving on to an adjacent area, was described to Thuan in considerable detail as an approach to solution of this problem.

6. Thuan recalled Gen McGarr's suggestion of "no man's land" along border. He stated that this would require movement of many villages within this area and would present problems of considerable magnitude for GVN.

7. In summary he stated that recommended composition of 20,000 man force increase was acceptable. He stated that most of DOD reorganization might be accepted within day or two, except as noted above. JGS reorganization (centralized control for counterinsurgency) would be expedited and an answer might be expected in about a week.

On economic side Thuan said decree being issued on measures to place tax collections on current basis and that discussion would be undertaken with USOM about other means financing counterinsurgency plan on imminent return of Hoang Thanh, Chairman Credit Commercial, from abroad. These discussions would relate particularly to deficit financing since Thanh had already discussed sale government bonds with local banks who might take up to 1.5 billion piasters in such bonds at 3 per cent. Thuan said rubber taxes now in force would increase yield from rubber companies by 200 million piasters annually (his estimate given on Feb 25 to USOM director was 180 million).

On political side Thuan commented in general terms that GVN is taking measures along lines proposed in plan. Emb officer agreed this is true with respect certain of recommended measures. Thuan

then took up specific political measures proposed in plan (enclosure 2 despatch 351 [3]) emphasizing action being taken on certain recommendations but skipping over others:

1. He said that as GVN ministers already appear before National Assembly committees they could be questioned about operation their departments and he indicated this might be done publicly. GVN however opposed adoption of US system of investigation by legislative branch of executive department since that exists in no other country. It was pointed out that main purpose our suggestion was to find means to dispel rumors and doubtful that limited questioning of ministers would achieve that objective.

2. Thuan said wider legislative initiative now being permitted but made no comment on broader publicity about debate in National Assembly.

3. He said appointment oppositionists to cabinet posts would depend upon their acceptance of policy of chief. Was pointed out to him however that establishment national unity, which vital for conducting war against insurgents, may well require compromise on both sides. Thuan referred to current efforts outside government to establish national unity front (our G-346 [4]).

4. He said he would take up with president proposals about altering or disbanding Can Lao Party.

5. He noted quickly in passing that GVN agreeable to encouragement adoption liberal press code bill by Assembly, to more frequent press conferences and to permit foreign correspondents to travel in interior.

6. He said arrangements for Vietnamese to study abroad already liberalized and noted even relatives of oppositionists permitted go abroad for study. He said SecState Interior Vui Van Luong had eased restrictions on departure Vietnamese from Viet-Nam after assuming office last Oct. Thuan claimed no particular difficulties exist about exit from Viet-Nam other than those related to foreign currency restrictions and fears of smuggling. (We believe there has been some recent easing of controls for leaving Viet-Nam. USOM reports students taking its competitive examinations for scholarships now being approved by GVN on straight merit basis. CAS states delays met by other Vietnamese in obtaining passports appreciably cut down since Luong took over Interior and lower level officials instead of denying applications also required provide superiors with reasons for proposing deny issuance of passports.)

On internal security council aspects of plan Thuan expressed intention increase authority of present secretary of council (Permanent Secretary General for National Defense) but Embassy suspects that SecState for Presidency himself will continue to be main coordinator of ISC decisions. Thuan said GVN considering establishment internal security council at regional, provincial, district and village

[3] See footnote 3, Document 11.

[4] Dated February 10, it reported the efforts of the Government of Vietnam to create a broad peoples organization which included both opposition and government supporters. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/2-1061)

levels, noting that British had also recommended this idea since it was used successfully in Malaya.

Country Team Representatives told Thuan in conclusion that Ambassador would probably wish discuss plan (especially political aspects) further with GVN on his return. [5]

Cunningham

[5] Durbrow raised the question with Thuan on March 11, but the Secretary of State for the Presidency added little to the information in this telegram. Durbrow concluded his report on the conversation by stating that he would continue to press for a detailed agreed plan. (Telegram 1454 from Saigon, March 11, *ibid.* 751K.5-MSP/3-1161, *Declassified Documents, 1975* p. 315A)

16. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, March 1, 1961—6:50 p.m.

1115. White House ranks defense Viet-Nam among highest priorities US foreign policy. Having approved Counterinsurgency Plan, President concerned whether Viet-Nam can resist Communist pressure during 18–24 month period before Plan takes full effect. Therefore White House has asked Department study what steps could be implemented as promptly as possible to further strengthen defenses Viet-Nam.

Unless Ambassador perceives objections following actions, largely taken from Counterinsurgency Plan, to be undertaken immediately without awaiting GVN approval Plan.

A. Actions primarily responsibility of DOD, CINCPAC and MAAG to be approved by Ambassador prior to implementation, provided CINCPAC perceives no objections.

1. Make IBM run to find military personnel best qualified give counterguerrilla training to VN armed forces. On priority basis send such personnel to MAAG/Saigon and cut short tours less qualified MAAG personnel now in Viet-Nam.

2. In order hasten training VN armed forces and use experience gained by British in Malaya, Department will discuss with British

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/3-1261. Secret; Priority; Limit Distribution. Drafted by Wood on February 24, cleared with Anderson, Cleveland, Steeves, Rice, Admiral Heinz, SPA, S, S/S, and ICA, and approved by Parsons. Also sent to CINCPAC for PolAd and repeated to Paris for Nolting.

whether they willing send two or three British and/or Malayan officers to MAAG to discuss best means incorporating group British and Malayan personnel into well defined part ARVN or Civil Guard counterguerrilla training program. It is suggested that a place be found for British and Malayans in program.

3. Assign high priority to MAP program for Viet-Nam.

4. Without awaiting VN acceptance Counterinsurgency Plan devise and implement program for insuring adequate counterguerrilla training within 18 months of 65 ARVN Ranger Companies now in existence.

5. Give higher priority within Plan to activating 21 additional Ranger Companies.

6. Modify Plan to increase number of Ranger Companies by 40 and reduce proposed additional Infantry Regiments proportionately.

7. In conjunction with CAS increase emphasis on training individuals to penetrate VC.

8. Give high priority within Plan to Border Patrol (B–V), village transceivers (B–VI–5) and Civic Action (B–VII).[2]

9. Start immediately, with or without GVN participation as judged best by Ambassador preparation over-all Operations Plan for driving Viet Cong from Viet-Nam. Unless other methods can be proved better, this plan should be geographically phased. Plan should spell out minimum degree border control and cooperation with RKG which would be needed. It should include best means consolidating safe areas (taking into consideration Nhu's views on "lines of strength") as bases from which to move against nearby insecure areas. Plan for consolidation safe areas should set forth explicitly best means holding safe areas after ARVN moves on and best means retaining and increasing popular support in safe areas (latter to include types civic action to be undertaken by ARVN in newly won safe areas, whether feasible encourage GVN send promptly to such newly won areas competent VN administrators and health, education and agricultural technicians (preferably in that order), election youths to Village Councils and installation village radio receivers (B–VII–A–10,11).

B. Actions for approval and implementation by Ambassador.

1. Counterinsurgency Plan calls for several actions in economic field (Despatch 317[1]). These actions, rightly, are primarily aimed at retaining loyalty of peasants. In interests achieving continuing results as rapidly as possible, it suggested these actions be given priorities. Priorities suggested below are based on assumption that what VN peasants want can be listed in following order of importance: a) physical security (purpose entire plan), b) more money, c) land, d) health, e) education, f) better farming methods. On this assumption priorities for the peasant would be in this order: a) higher prices to peasants for rice (while realizing GVN has instituted such program, there are many middlemen between peasant and piaster and it recommended we lay heavy and continuing stress on importance

[1] These and similar letter-number combinations in this telegram refer to the annexes, appendices, and tabs of Document 1.

[2] Not printed. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/1-2561)

GVN take all steps insure effectiveness this program). b) Increase availability credit to farmer (GVN has now with USOM assistance established successful National Agricultural Credit Organization (NACO), but its capital inadequate reach majority peasants.) Request USOM study how US can help NACO increase rate capital expansion more rapidly. c) Consider how and when GVN might be encouraged take next step rice land redistribution by lowering maximum holdings to 50 hectares. d) Re Administrators, assume we will continue our support National Institute Administration. Re employment administrators and health, education and agricultural technicians, see A, 9 above.

2. Ambassador may wish suggest appropriate member Country Team and staff study question treatment VC prisoners for purpose encouraging defections. Such study should consider a) methods employed by Magsaysay whereby GOP actively assisted peasants who had fought on side Huks, but were not Communists, to establish themselves as farmers in Mindanao (will pouch more on this); b) Burman method described by Colonel Maung Maung whereby prisoner told that since he a prisoner he must have failed. Prisoner asked analyze why had failed, what wrong with (Communist) system which permitted such failure. If possible prisoners persuaded write self-criticism. If suitable, such statement distribution to guerrillas as part psywar operations. Such study to include consideration of whether GVN should be encouraged publicly offer large rewards for capture VC leaders as done in Malaya.[4]

Rusk

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[4] On March 8, Durbrow cabled his general agreement with the points made in this telegram. The 19-page reply concluded:

"In summary, we have recognized since early stages formulation of CIP necessity take immediate actions where possible without awaiting formal approvals. These actions have been subject repeated meetings with GVN military and civilian authorities including Thuan and Diem. As indicated above, MAAG particularly urged adoption of counterinsurgency measures to include development of an Operations Plan for phased reduction of insurgency and has even prepared proposed implementing directives for GVN. In spite of this repeated advice pressing for immediate counterinsurgency action, GVN has not decreed required measures and there are strong indications that they will continue to delay necessary actions unless highly pressured to act promptly and decisively, which we endeavoring do. However, since we can only advise, development and implementation of any plans rest solely with GVN. Until Diem agrees to mutually acceptable National Plan for Counterinsurgency it is problematical whether RVNAF can develop, much less implement, meaningful Operations Plan for phased reduction of insurgency as described in para A9 reftel, although Tactics and Techniques treaties already prepared by MAAG is sound basis for such a plan.

"I shall continue vigorously push with Diem and Thuan for adoption comprehensive plan. Diem is procrastinating because main features of plan involve personnel and personalities, and these are hardest decisions for Diem to make because of his reluctance risk sharing power with anyone outside his family. If no appreciable success in obtaining Diem's decision by time I go Bangkok I hope Secretary can give me personal instructions at Bangkok to lay before Diem in effort bring about decision. If that does not succeed, we may then be compelled to request strong personal message from President Kennedy to Diem." (Telegram 1444 from [illegible], March 8; [illegible]

17. Letter From the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (McGarr) to the Director of Military Assistance, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Palmer) [1]

Saigon, March 3, 1961.

DEAR GENERAL PALMER: I am convinced that implementation of State Limited Distribution Message 1115, March 1, 1961, would be counter productive in that it will confuse and will retard the offensive of the Government of Vietnam against the Viet Cong which is finally getting underway. For this reason, I am enclosing a copy of a letter which I wrote Admiral Heinz, Director, Far East Region, OASD, International Security Affairs, which bears directly on the problem. [2]

I sincerely hope Defense is not stampeded into going along with the referenced State message as, contrary to its contention, it is counter to the approved Counter-Insurgency Plan in significant respects. We already have the approved overall Operations Plan for driving the Viet Cong from Vietnam which the message directs and parts of it are already underway. What we need now is time to implement our present sound plans with GVN—not directives to make major changes. It must also be understood that neither MAAG or the Ambassador can direct the GVN to follow our recommendations—we can only work through persuasion and advice.

Under the provisions of the Military Assistance Program and the authority of the Ambassador stated as a qualification to United States approval given the Counter-Insurgency Plan for Vietnam, military aid and other support can be withheld or withdrawn from the Government of Vietnam for noncompliance with certain requirements. This kind of action could, of course, lead to a weakening of GVN military action, would allow further Viet Cong successes, be dangerous to our position in Southeast Asia and be at variance with President Kennedy's announced intention to hold Vietnam. Therefore, our decision-making people will probably wish to reconsider

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OASD/ISA Files: FRC 64 A 2382, Vietnam 1961, 370.5–384. Secret. No drafting or clearance information is given on the source text.

[2] Not printed. In this six-page letter, dated February 27, McGarr elaborated on his reasons for opposing the Department of State position.

the possible withholding of such aid as contrary to our President's policy.

Sincerely,

Lionel C. McGarr
Lieutenant General, USA

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18. Letter From the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (McGarr) to Secretary of State for the Presidency Thuan [1]

Saigon, March 13, 1961.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: Following the presentation of the Counter-Insurgency Plan by Ambassador Durbrow to President Diem on February 13th, [2] I was encouraged by our apparent unity of interests and the likelihood that the plan in its entirety would prove substantially acceptable to your government.

My conversation with President Diem on Monday, March 6th, [3] bore out my feeling that he was favorably inclined to adopting the plan substantially as presented. Staff discussions on the proposed implementation of the plan have cast some doubt as to the understanding by your government of certain important military provisions of the Counter-Insurgency Plan which presumably had been agreed upon. These together are of such magnitude that their rejection would in MAAG's professional military opinion negate much of the plan's required effectiveness. I am most anxious that none of the several actions contemplated by the plan, particularly those which would involve MAP support, be taken piece meal until agreement has been reached on the military portion of the Counter-Insurgency Plan as a whole.

I am sure you realize that effectiveness of the plan will depend to a large extent on the equipment and supplies for the forces including the 20,000 ARVN augmentation and the 32,000 Civil

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878, Durbrow Demarches Confidential. Attached to a memorandum from McGarr to Durbrow, March 13, which stated that the letter to Thuan had been less pointed than McGarr had wanted in order to protect his source of information.

[2] See Document 11.

[3] A memorandum of McGarr's conversation with Diem on March 6 and the aide-memoire which he presented to the President were transmitted in despatch 422 from Saigon, March 23. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5/3-2361)

Guard. I am unable, as you were informed by the Ambassador, to order any MAP materials for these forces in spite of the long procurement lead time and consequent delayed arrivals involved, until formal agreement on the complete Counter-Insurgency Plan has been reached.

Among the major military provisions of the plan which I feel necessary and hope will be found acceptable to your government, are the following:

a. A military command structure providing an exclusively military chain of command (ie no civil agency included) from the Chief of the Joint General Staff RVNAF to the operational units in the field. *Comment:* The placing of substantial military forces under civil agencies not subordinate to military command control would operate to defeat this most contributive provision of the Counter-Insurgency Plan as this would give the military responsibility without commensurate authority.

b. A logistic system capable of unifying and coordinating the technical services at national level and carrying logistic control down through a logistic command structure at Corps level. *Comment:* You recently expressed to me your reluctance to adopt the central Logistic Command which under "Plan A" would balance the Field Command envisioned therein. I hope that General Sibley's recent discussion of this with Lieutenant Colonel Liem of your office has dispelled your apprehensions as to both the feasibility and desirability of the central Logistic Command which I feel confident will best meet your understandable requirements for sound DOD organization.[1]

c. The elimination of duplicate technical services such as presently exist in the case of the Chief of Engineer Services and the Engineer Field Command.

d. The composition of the force basis for the 20,000 RVNAF augmentation.

e. An improved and more cohesive intelligence and counter intelligence organization and operation.

f. Improved border and coastal patrol systems.

g. An improved and coherent national planning system for counter-insurgency and national security.

h. Certain military aspects of psychological warfare plans and operations.

i. The military aspects of an improved communications system.

I bring this to your attention because of the grave consequences involved in a failure to reach mutual understanding. These points have been discussed with Ambassador Durbrow since I feel success or failure in the fight against the Viet Cong rests on mutual understanding and agreement on the wise and early resolution of differences.

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[1] No record of this discussion between Brigadier General Alden K. Sibley, Deputy MAAG Chief, and Lieutenant Colonel Ky Quam Liem has been found.

To preclude the possibility that the military provisions of the plan proposed by my government and the professional reasoning which led to their inclusion in the plan are not fully understood, MAAG would welcome the opportunity for further discussion of these points with you or your staff.

I would also hope that before final actions are taken by your government on the important military provisions of the plan, we may be advised of the nature of these actions in order that any differences between your proposed actions and those included in the plan may be resolved. This would result in reaching mutually acceptable decisions which will enable the United States to provide the necessary added support for the Counter-Insurgency effort.

Sincerely,

Lionel C. McGarr[3]
Lieutenant General, USA

[3] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

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19. Memorandum From the President's Military Aide (Clifton) to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy)[1]

Washington, March 14, 1961

The President asked when our new Ambassador would arrive in Viet-Nam.[2] I explained to him that the man is staying in Paris to help General Gavin,[3] that we expect him here the first week in May, and he will probably get to Viet-Nam about the first of June.

The President directed that we see what we can do to speed this up. He feels that the man must help General Gavin "for two or three weeks." But he asked why the man couldn't go directly from Paris to Viet-Nam and get started.

I offered that the man had to stop in Washington for his debriefing on the situation in France, and a re-briefing for the situation

[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Confidential. No drafting or clearance information is given on the source text.

[2] President Kennedy sent the nomination of Frederick E. Nolting, Jr., Deputy Permanent Representative to NATO, to the Senate on February 17. The Senate confirmed Nolting on March 15.

[3] General James M. Gavin, Ambassador to France.

in Viet-Nam, including a trip which Mr. Rostow plans for him to the Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg for one day. The President said: "Well, I guess this has to be done, but let's see what we can do to speed up the operation so that it isn't the first of June before he is in charge out there." [4]

C.V. Clifton [5]

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[4] In a memorandum to Lucius D. Battle, the Secretary's Special Assistant, March 21, Deputy Under Secretary of State for Administration Jones stated that Nolting would leave Paris on April 15 rather than May 1 and after 2 weeks of consultations in Washington would fly directly to Saigon arriving early in May. (Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series)

[5] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

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20. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Washington, March 16, 1961—7 p.m.

1466. Reference Embassy telegram 1454. [2] saw Diem 16th for hour and quarter to urge his acceptance agreed comprehensive Counter-Insurgency Plan (CIP). From my conversation 11th with Thuan (reftel) General McGarr and MAAG officers have come to basic oral agreement with Thuan and others on acceptance main military CIP suggestions which MAAG considers it can live with provided GVN follows through with proper implementation. However as GVN position on several other fundamental CIP suggestions was not yet clear, I decided to take up directly with Diem. Following summary conversation.

I opened conversation by stating expected go Bangkok end of month to see Secretary who would surely ask me full details re GVN reaction to CIP. Since it imperative we work out agreed plan in some detail and this will take time, I urged Diem to nominate competent military and civilian officials with power of decision to go over our plan with MAAG and embassy officers in order to come to agreement on plan and avoid any future misunderstanding. Since I will leave for Bangkok in about 10 days, I urged Diem nominate his

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/3-1661. Secret; Repeated to Phnom Penh, Bangkok, Vientiane, London, Paris for Nolting, and CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] See footnote 3, Document 15.

officials soonest so that group can get together in hope that I would be in position to inform Secretary agreed plan worked out. Diem assured me would do this and reaffirmed it just before I left.

I stated I was pleased learn MAAG had come to basic agreement with GVN on military aspects CIP and that Thuan had ensured me of GVN agreement on many other aspects. Nevertheless, there were still certain important CIP suggestions which should be discussed in detail. I then enumerated following points:

(1) We believe it important to attain further national unity that Diem make reasonable offer take one or two non-commie oppositionists into cabinet.

(2) I stated we still receiving allegations and rumors about Can Lao party secret activities which, whether true or not, are harmful to GVN. I again urged that party come out in open or dissolve itself and suggested might be worthwhile pass law or issue decree stating against law have any secret parties Viet-Nam, pointing out this would help give legal basis act against various secret parties even covert communist-front organizations.

Diem interrupted me at this point to describe what he called favorable evolution among non-communist oppositionists which now taking place. He stated many of those who took part in coup see errors their ways and now realize if they had won they would have only assisted communist take-over. According Diem most oppositionists, whether those arrested because of coup or others, now in process changing their attitude and realize it in national interests they try to work more closely with GVN. For this reason too soon to make offer cabinet posts to oppositionists but, without making firm promise, he stated that if some non-commies could agree basic policy GVN he might take them into government after election.

He did not directly reply to my Can Lao suggestion but stated that more and more oppositionists and public in general coming to realize allegations and rumors re party are not true. I interjected these developments all more reason why Can Lao Party should come into open or dissolve and why he should seriously make reasonable offers non-communists enter Govt. Diem made no promises.

(3) I stated it's absolutely fundamental for success CIP to have effective central intelligence organization. Diem agreed and stated he had finally decided to appoint Col. Y as head of Central Intelligence. He spoke highly of Y who has good combat record and has done very well in running re-education centers. I expressed hope he would take over duties soonest and Diem stated he now working out details.

(4) I pointed out one of most necessary parts of CIP is to have better RKG relations. I reminded him I had talked to Mau and Thuan twice and once to him about bad effects of anti-Sihanouk

articles in *Saigon Mai*,[3] adding that we convinced these articles probably sparked RKG tirade against alleged ill treatment Vietnamese-Khmers. Diem said he had sent word to editors of *Saigon Mai* point out harm they doing by publishing such articles, but editors replied someone had to answer continuing anti-GVN press campaign Phnom Penh. I replied while I realized GVN had maintained press truce for many months during which anti-GVN campaign continued Phnom Penh, it fundamental that GVN not permit mere press campaign prevent efforts establish better RKG relations.

I reminded Diem General McGarr convinced it would be almost impossible put down Viet Cong threat unless work out some border control arrangements. I then stated while we too deplored RKG tirade to UN, etc., GVN should use incident to point out RKG safety and welfare of population in Delta, including Vietnamese-Khmers, endangered by VC attacks and atrocities and therefore in interest of both countries work out border arrangement (Depcirtel 1370[4]).

Diem went into his usual line re impossibility work out arrangement with Sihanouk, "who now considers himself world statesman". He added certain ex-French colonialists, particularly French army captain Vietnamese origin (I think he said Huyen Dinh La), had been permitted by Sihanouk to come to Cambodia after November coup to try to stir up GVN opposition. Diem stated other unnamed French colonialists permitted to return Cambodia for same purpose and certain of them in touch with Hanoi. This proved Sihanouk did not wish good relations. Diem then said when Pinay[5] here recently he had pointed this out to him and given details re VC sanctuary Cambodia and Pinay had taken matter up with Sihanouk urging it very much RKG interests prevent VC using its territory since if VC should take over SVN, RKG would be next target. After Sihanouk had put on tirade against GVN, particularly treatment Vietnamese Khmers, Pinay—according to Diem—told Sihanouk he was "spitting in his own soup" by not trying have better GVN relations. Incidentally he mentioned in passing Ho Thong Minh trying stir trouble by talking Gen. Lawton Collins. Diem then stated recently province chief Kien Tuong had informally met with opposite RKG province chief in effort collaborate. According Diem, RKG province chief shortly thereafter removed. I replied this unfortunate but matter cannot be arranged at local level as it must be worked out with Sihanouk. Diem said that Vice President Tho had informally been in contact with friends who were RKG ministers in effort to try to

[3] See footnote 4, Document 11.

[4] Circular telegram 1370 discussed reprisals against Khmers in South Vietnam (Department of State, Central Files, 651H.51K/3-1061)

[5] Antoine Pinay, Independent Deputy in the French National Assembly

encourage negotiations. Diem added these efforts got nowhere because Sihanouk opposed. I again reiterated no matter RKG provocation it essential in fight against VC to have better relations. Diem made no promises.

(I took occasion discussion *Saigon Mai* articles to say I very concerned series of recent *Saigon Mai* articles stating "Americans" in touch with presidential candidate Truyen and while articles did not say official Americans they inferred as much. I stated such inference harmful all concerned and urged Diem use this false information as another lever to stop *Saigon Mai* anti-RKG attacks. Diem replied editors probably motivated by "evidence" Truyen and presidential candidate that have been showing local press consisting several pictures these two candidates at social gatherings with "Americans". Diem deplored this harmful publicity and promised to try stop it.)

(5) I stated pleased note several press code bills before assembly and urged one be passed soonest. Diem promised to do this and asked whether I did not believe press here now more active in criticism, etc. Replied I pleased this development which very helpful.

(6) Stated I also pleased learn press would be permitted be present when ministers interrogated by assembly commissions (ref-tel) and urged press be encouraged publish details assembly debates, particularly when several bills being discussed on same subject. Diem replied press free to attend all assembly meetings but subjects so dry they have no public appeal. I agreed but urged press be encouraged give details so some of public would be better informed pros and cons important questions.

(7) I again urged he make modest payments to peasants called upon furnish labor, particularly those for instance who work on agrovilles but would not live there and would thus get no benefit from their labor. Diem replied peasants everywhere except those in Cochin-China area gladly contributed to community development. He added if he tried to tax them it would cause more disgruntlement. He argued even those who did not get into agrovilles received considerable benefits from establishment nearby markets, schools, hospitals and maternity wards. I stated that while this undoubtedly true, corvee labor was one of principal things used by communists to cause disgruntlement Delta.

(8) I then asked whether elections of youth to village councils proceeding and whether internal security councils at provincial and district levels being established. He replied he has given strict orders youth elections be fully democratic since this first step in electoral process to be implemented later on broader scale and therefore public must be assured these honest elections. He corrected me by saying his plan did not call for internal security councils at provincial and district level but would be purely provincial councils, not

necessarily limited to internal security. He would not implement this part of reform until after election since he could be accused using councils to back his campaign. I stated CIP called for lower level internal security councils as well. He promised think this over.

(9) I asked when he would implement other reforms announced February 6th. He had same answer that to appoint ministers and others, including members national economic council, before elections could be used by opposition to say he appointing his supporters to help in campaign. He pointed out he desires Vice President Tho to take other functions but it would hurt his campaign with business community if he changed from national economy to some other ministry before elections.

(10) I then urged Diem to put into practice many psychological warfare suggestions in CIP, particularly those which would induce VC's to desert. He said he doing this to certain extent but had to be careful because of VC reprisals against relatives. He added he nevertheless has chosen several ex-VC's who will make public statements against VC's just before elections.

Comment. Diem was most affable, exuded confidence and for first time expressed some gratitude our CIP efforts which he promised implement as best he could. Again before giving full green light believe we should await outcome detail discussion by GVN-US officials. In meantime MAAG quietly ordering some equipment for 20,000 increase (Embtel 1444 *)

Durbrow

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* See footnote 4, Document 16.

21. Memorandum of a Conversation, Embassy Residence, Bangkok, March 27, 1961, 7:30 p.m.[1]

US/MC/7

PARTICIPANTS

United States
The Secretary
Ambassador Elbridge Durbrow, American Ambassador to Viet-Nam

Viet-Nam
Nguyen V. Thuan, Vietnamese Secretary of State for the Presidency and Acting Secretary of State for Defense
Mr. Dang Duc Khoi, Vietnamese Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok

SUBJECT

Situation in Viet-Nam

At the request of the Government of Viet-Nam, the Secretary had a talk with Mr. Thuan for 50 minutes in the evening of March 27.

The Secretary opened the discussion by stating he was pleased that Mr. Thuan could take the trouble to come to Bangkok to discuss Vietnamese problems with him, since he unfortunately could not spare the time to visit Saigon. The Secretary asked Mr. Thuan to extend his best wishes to President Diem which Mr. Thuan promised to do.

Thuan then stated he wished to discuss two matters: 1) the situation in Viet-Nam and 2) the Vietnamese Government's concern regarding Lao developments. Mr. Thuan said it was unfortunate that the world in general did not realize the seriousness of the Viet Cong (VC) activities and threat in Viet-Nam. Often foreign correspondents praised the progress being made in Viet-Nam in the economic and agricultural fields but usually they emphasized the lack of democratic freedoms in his country. These correspondents failed to realize that Viet-Nam is an under-developed country both economically and politically, and they seem to ignore the fact that since the end of 1959 the Viet Cong have changed their tactics from subversion and persuasion to all-out guerilla terrorism. The Viet Cong have increased the number of trained cadre coming from the north and the DRV (North Vietnam) have announced publicly that they are doing all they can to overthrow the GVN (South Vietnam) in order to prevent economic progress and set up a weak Communist front

[1] Source: Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 65 D 366, CF 1023. Confidential. Drafted by Durbrow on March 29 and approved in S on April 4. Rusk and Durbrow were in Bangkok for the SEATO Council meeting, March 27–29.

government in order to unify the country under the Viet Cong. For these reasons President Diem cannot put into effect all the democratic freedoms, but as the Viet Cong threat diminishes and the people become educated and more sophisticated democracy can make progress.

To emphasize this point, Thuan reported a conversation that Mr. G. Menon, the Indian Chairman of the International Control Commission (ICC), had had with Gen. Giap, the DRV Chief of Staff. According to Menon, Giap recently told him that the DRV desired to get rid of the Diem regime and replace it with a "friendly" government in order that the latter could carry out the provisions of the Geneva Accords to unite North and South Vietnam. Thuan interpreted Giap's statement to mean that the latter desired to set up a front government in South Vietnam which in fact would be fully Communist controlled.

Thuan then reminded the Secretary that President Diem and his entire government are 100 percent anti-Communists and have, during the last 7 years, cooperated fully with the free world and done all they could to prevent the Communists from taking over South Vietnam. Thuan added very few in the free world realized that the GVN is actually at war. To point this up, he stated that between two and three hundred South Vietnamese troops were being killed each month and many more civilians were being killed by Viet Cong terrorists. He continued, very few on the outside realized that the Viet Cong occupied practically the entire countryside in South Vietnam for ten years prior to 1954. During this time, they indoctrinated a large part of the population with Communist ideas, kidnapped a lot of South Vietnamese youth when they moved north under the Geneva Accords and many soldiers in the Viet Cong Army are married to South Vietnamese or are the brothers or sons of people from that area. Because of this fact, the Viet Cong are able to bring strong pressure on relatives in the south to collaborate with them. When President Diem took over the government in 1954 from the French, the latter only controlled the main towns and the main highways. For that reason, Diem had to exert a great deal of effort and energy from 1954 to 1956 to regain control of the countryside and generally stabilize the internal security. From 1956 to 1959 considerable progress was made in economic and agricultural development and basically for this reason the Viet Cong in late 1959 changed their tactics and are now trying to prevent further progress.

Thuan then referred to the Counter-Insurgency Plan (CIP) which we presented to the GVN some six weeks ago. Thuan stated that in recent meetings in Saigon, American and Vietnamese experts had come to substantial agreement on the U.S. plan as presented. While the GVN agreed basically with the plan, they were very much

concerned by the fact that the plan would require them to meet all the piaster expenses. Thuan continued, that by extraordinary efforts such as putting in new taxes, collecting old taxes more effectively and by making arrangements with local banks to float a government loan, the GVN would be able to meet most of the piaster costs of the CIP for calendar year 1961. He added, however, that although the banks had agreed to try to float the loan, they had insisted that half of the loan should be used for economic development purposes instead of entirely for military counter insurgency expenditures. Thuan then said that the GVN frankly did not know how it could raise sufficient piasters for calendar year 1962 to pay the cost of the CIP. He said one of the reasons for this was that the "Buy American" program and the U.S. insistence that all aid shipments be made in U.S. ships would, in fact, reduce the effective amount of U.S. aid by 30 percent in the future. He backed his arguments about the piaster shortage by quoting from statements made to him by the Brookings–Ford Foundation financial expert team now in Vietnam. According to Thuan, the team experts after several months' study came to the conclusion that the GVN could not raise more taxes without raising prices or causing a fairly serious inflation. Thuan added the reason prices had so far not gone up more, although heavier taxes had recently been imposed, is that there have been sufficient stocks of consumers goods in the country to meet the basic demands. Once these stocks are exhausted, there is bound to be a shortage and inflation. The financial experts also told Thuan that before an accurate figure could be set for the devaluation of the piaster, it would be necessary to make a careful study of the entire Vietnamese price structure. The experts believed that until this is done it would be wrong to set the new piaster rate at 60 to the dollar since this might cause serious disruption of the economy, stop progress, and might cause further inflation, unless it turned out to be the right rate. The experts said it would take them about five months more to complete the price structure study. For this reason, the GVN could not accept the suggestion in the CIP that as a last resort the GVN could devalue in order to obtain sufficient piasters for their counter insurgency needs. He admitted that the GVN had earned comparatively large amounts of foreign exchange in 1960 and had fairly large reserves. However, because of the Buy American policy and their extraordinary expenditures in connection with the fight against the Viet Cong, the GVN had to spend a comparatively large amount of this exchange for necessary imports.

Thuan then thanked the Secretary for approving the force increase of 20,000 men which were [was] urgently needed to give adequate protection to the population now seriously harassed by the VC. In view of the fact that the VC are stepping up their attacks

prior to the coming presidential elections in April, he, Minister of Defense, had given firm orders to all security forces to go on and continue on the offensive. While these tactics were effective, they were causing considerable losses on both sides. He added that the despite [sic] the all-out effort that must be made to fight the VC, it is also essential to carry on as much economic and agricultural development as possible under the circumstances.

The Secretary thanked Thuan for his explanation of the situation and assured him that the United States Government would give as much assistance to Vietnam as it can to fight the VC threat and maintain its independence and integrity. He then asked Thuan whether the GVN had any long-range development plans. Thuan replied that they had a three-year plan which is being carried out as best it can be under the present circumstances. He pointed out that one of the main objectives of the plan is to bring about a gradual devaluation of the currency. Despite the efforts made in this field, Thuan stated that he disagreed with the U.S. contention in the CIP that the GVN for various reasons could not usefully absorb any more aid. Thuan admitted that if the present list of goods which can be imported through U.S. aid is maintained and if the Buy American policy remained in effect, the GVN might not be able to use even all the U.S. aid available for FY 61. He contended, however, that if USOM would revise the list of commodities paid for by American aid, the GVN could not only use all the FY 61 aid money but a considerably larger amount. In this connection, he agreed that the present US balance of payments criterion for aid would have merit if the GVN was not confronted by a serious VC threat. Under the circumstances, however, exceptions should be made to the balance of payments approach in order to permit the GVN to obtain enough piasters to implement the CIP. Thuan emphasized that one of the principal needs was to give security protection to the people in the countryside who were being constantly harassed, propagandized and intimidated by the VC. This costs a great deal. He added that this extra aid is needed until the many factories now being built or in production can produce enough goods to meet the consumers' needs and if these needs are not met, serious inflation will ensue.

The Secretary again thanked Thuan for his full explanation and assured him of continued US support. He added that President Kennedy himself had personally approved the CIP. The new administration, however, has found it necessary to study carefully the methods and results of US aid programs in the past 15 years in order to find out what mistakes had been made and which methods had proved most efficacious. The administration believes that, in the past, there were too many short term plans and projects which, as good as they may have been, were not aimed at long range goals in

individual countries. For these reasons, the Administration is asking the Congress to make available funds for longer periods of time. If this is granted, not only can the United States plan ahead but it is essential that each individual country put into effect their own long range plans to attain desired goals as soon as possible. For instance, countries should set goals ten years hence and then draw up plans to work on projects each year which would lead to these goals.

The Secretary then said that economic and military aid will do no good if efforts are not made simultaneously to explain to the people what the government is doing, the goals they hope to attain and the sacrifices needed. This is particularly essential in countries fighting Communist "promise". The Secretary then urged that the GVN do all it can to better its international relations, particularly with countries in its own area. He mentioned such countries as India and Burma. He stated unless these countries are aware of Vietnam's problems, what they are doing about it and how they hope to attain their desired goals and explain to them the seriousness of the VC threat, these countries will neither understand the plight of Vietnam nor do anything to help the GVN. The Secretary stated it is essential also to fill in the foreign press on these same problems.

Reverting to the CIP, the Secretary stated it is essential that the GVN establish as soon as possible an effective chain of military command in order that the security forces may be used as effectively as possible in the battle against the Communists. If the country does not use all its resources, military, political, psychological and economic, to best advantage, it will be difficult if not impossible to overcome the VC threat.

Thuan thanked the Secretary for his explanations of the Administration's point-of-view and stated that shortly after the elections the GVN expects to have Tunku Abdel Rahman and Gen. Nasution visit Vietnam in order to strengthen relations with these neighbors. The GVN is also endeavoring to build up its prestige in Africa, but this is proving difficult because of what they term the ChiComs "Operation Checkbook". Thuan explained that the Chinese National Foreign Minister had explained to the GVN Foreign Minister recently that in connection with GRC efforts to win friends in Africa one of the African leaders asked how much the GRC could give in aid and the GRC Ambassador promised to inquire into the matter. Shortly thereafter, the Chinese Communist Ambassador was asked the same question and when given the answer, he was presented with a check immediately by the Communist representative. Mr. Durbrow interjected, to remind Thuan that part of the CIP called for serious efforts by the GVN to better its relations with Cambodia. Thuan, citing how difficult this is, stated that the Vice President had had discussions with the Cambodian Foreign Minister just the day

before and it was hoped that these talks would lead to good results. In this connection, Thuan particularly commented on the anti-GVN campaign recently mounted in Phnom Penh in connection with the alleged flight of hundreds of Vietnamese of Cambodian origin to Cambodia. He decided it was too bad that this Viet Cong organized incident had caused so much difficulty. He then referred to the Cambodian Assembly resolution of March 24 which was particularly derogatory to the GVN and stated that he was pleased to have been told by Mr. Durbrow that it was quite evident that this resolution had been written and pushed through by the Communist elements. Thuan stated that the GVN is making extraordinary efforts to have better international press relations and reminded the Secretary of the rather sweeping governmental reforms Diem has already announced. He added that most of these reforms would be put into effect by April 15, a few days after the presidential election.

Thuan spoke for only a minute or two about Laos, indicating that the GVN was naturally deeply concerned about the prospects of the country going Communist and stated that the GVN supports the Boun Oum Government. He expressed concern about growing reports that the Viet Cong are coming through the passes from North Viet-Nam into Laos to create bases in the Southeastern part of that country which are being used for attacks into Viet-Nam.

In conclusion, the Secretary thanked Thuan again for his clear expose of the situation in Viet-Nam. The Secretary then said that the Administration is endeavoring to speed up procedures and decisions, therefore, he suggested that Mr. Thuan discuss these problems frankly and fully with Mr. Nolting, the Ambassador-Designate to Viet-Nam, a man of proven ability who will be very understanding. The Secretary again assured Thuan that we appreciate fully the anti-Communist stand of the Diem Government and we will do all we can to help, but our efforts must be mutual.

22. National Intelligence Estimate [1]

NIE 50-61 *Washington, March 28, 1961*

OUTLOOK IN MAINLAND SOUTHEAST ASIA

The Problem

a. To analyze the basic political and social conditions and trends in mainland Southeast Asia, [2]

b. To identify potential political-military crisis situations and to estimate probable developments over the next year or so in domestic stability and international orientation of the countries of the area, and

c. To estimate the probable effects on the peoples and governments of these countries in the event there were significant Communist gains in Laos or South Vietnam.

Conclusions

1. Most Southeast Asian countries are either now experiencing or will encounter in the next year or two serious political crises arising out of foreign intervention, domestic strains, or a complex of factors attributable to their basically unstable and unhealthy political, social, and economic structure. By far the most serious problems are the deteriorating situation in Laos and the mounting Communist threat and precarious governmental situation in South Vietnam. (*Paras. 22–68*)

2. The Pathet Lao probably have a greater military capability than they have yet chosen to exercise. They could sharply step up the action at any time and probably achieve a series of local victories. This would increase the likelihood of the disintegration of the Laotian Army and the subsequent collapse of the non-Communist position. The Laotian crisis has become a matter of contention among the major powers and its resolution rests primarily in non-Laotian hands. (*Paras. 28–30*)

3. In South Vietnam, the situation of the Diem government seems likely to become increasingly difficult, not only because of rising Communist guerrilla strength and declining internal security but also because of widening dissatisfaction with Diem's government. Since the coup attempt of November 1960, Diem has re-

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[1] Source: Johnson Library, VP Security Files, Nations and Regions Series, Program of Action for Vietnam. Secret. Submitted by the Director of Central Intelligence and concurred in by the U.S. Intelligence Board on March 28.

[2] Laos, South Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, and Malaya. [Footnote in the source text.]

asserted his control of the government and made some cautious moves toward government reform; he has taken action to improve the antiguerrilla capabilities of the army and stepped up military activities against the Viet Cong. Nonetheless, the factors which gave rise to the November 1960 coup attempt still exist, and we believe that the odds favor another coup attempt by non-Communist elements in the next year or so. The Communists would attempt to exploit any new efforts to unseat the government. We are not confident that the army would be able to keep the situation from getting out of hand. (*Paras. 36–38*)

4. There is deep awareness among the countries of Southeast Asia that developments in the Laotian crisis, and its outcome, have a profound impact on their future. The governments of the area tend to regard the Laotian crisis as a symbolic test of intentions, wills, and strengths between the major powers of the West and the Communist Bloc. (*Para. 69*)

5. Those countries which are in close alignment with the US favor stronger measures to assure at least a non-Communist and preferably an anti-Communist, western-oriented regime in Laos; neutralist Burma and Cambodia, as well as Malaya, favor a neutralist but not Communist-dominated government. These latter governments favor some form of international political agreement to end the crisis. They would be alarmed if Laos were lost under conditions which indicated to them that the US position in the area had gravely weakened. (*Para. 70*)

6. The loss of Laos to the Communists, or perhaps even the division of the country, would almost certainly incline the Thai toward accommodation to Communist power in Southeast Asia. A predominantly Communist-controlled Laos would vitally threaten South Vietnam's independence; it would greatly extend the Communist frontiers with South Vietnam; it would bring substantially greater Communist military power to bear on the crucial Saigon defense complex; and it would greatly facilitate Communist infiltration and subversion. The close proximity of a Communist state would make more difficult Western efforts to starch up local resistance. In short, the loss of Laos would severely damage the US position and its influence in Thailand and South Vietnam. (*Para. 72*)

7. The future course of all of the countries of Southeast Asia would be strongly influenced by the actual circumstances in which the loss or division of Laos had occurred as well as the local appraisal of the attitude and actions of the US in response to the situation. The extent to which these countries would go in resisting Bloc pressures or in withstanding local Communist threats would depend in great degree on whether they still assessed that the US could stem further Communist expansion in the area. They would

feel more keenly than before a strong temptation to take a neutral position between the two power blocs, even though they recognized that the US is the only country with sufficient power to oppose the Communist Bloc in the area. Although they probably would be deeply disillusioned regarding US resolution after the loss or division of Laos, they would nonetheless welcome demonstrations of US firmness and might in response modify their appraisal of their own future in due course. (*Para. 73*)

8. Although the Communist threat to South Vietnam has reached serious proportions, the chances of a Communist takeover in the next year or so are considerably less than they are in Laos. Nevertheless, Peiping and Hanoi almost certainly attach greater importance to their efforts in South Vietnam than they do to their efforts in Laos. US prestige and policy are particularly deeply engaged in South Vietnam. Diem's policy of close alignment with the US is on trial in the current crisis. All countries of the area would attach great importance to a failure of the South Vietnam Government to cope successfully with the rising tempo of Communist subversion and armed insurrection. If South Vietnam were to fall to the Communists or be forced to swing toward neutralism, the impact upon the countries of Southeast Asia would be similar in kind but considerably more severe than that resulting from the loss or division of Laos. (*Para. 74*)

[Here follow paragraphs 9–74, a detailed discussion of the question.]

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23. Editorial Note

At the third closed session of the SEATO Council meeting, March 29, the United States Delegation introduced a draft resolution that had the unanimous support of all the attending Foreign Ministers. Paragraphs 7 and 8 of the resolution read:

"The Council also noted with concern the efforts of an armed minority, again supported from outside in violation of the Geneva Accords, to destroy the Government of Vietnam and declared its firm revolve not to acquiesce in any such take over of that country.

"Finally, the Council records its view that the Organization should continue to keep developments in Laos and Vietnam under urgent and constant review in the light of this resolution."

This resolution was approved by the Council as part of the final communiqué with the addition of the word "South" before Vietnam in paragraph 7. For full text of the final communiqué, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1961*, pages 940–943. The United States Delegation record of the third closed session was transmitted in Secto 27 from Bangkok, March 29. It and other documentation on the SEATO meeting are in Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 65 D 366, CFs 1822–1931.

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24. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President [1]

Washington, April 3, 1961.

SUBJECT

Counter-Guerrilla Programs

Herewith Bob McNamara's replies to the questions which arose from my visit to Bragg. I am sending a copy to Bissell who is in charge of our general review of counter-guerrilla operations. He will consider with his team the substantive problems involved, and they will form a part of his final submission. Secretary McNamara could not have been more helpful in all this.

Attachment

QUESTIONS CONCERNING COUNTER-GUERRILLA PROGRAMS [2]

Question 1. "Why are the capabilities of the helicopter not being fully exploited in the counter-guerrilla program of the Vietnamese? The helicopter is uniquely effective in tracking down guerrillas."

General McGarr, Chief of the MAAG in Vietnam, is intensely interested in the counter-guerrilla problem there and is well aware of the importance of helicopters in a counter-guerrilla role. Instruction

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, President's Office File, Counterinsurgency. Secret. Initialed by Rostow.

[2] On the source text McNamara wrote: "3/30 To Mr. Walt Rostow. Walt here is information relating to the questions you raised."

of the Vietnamese Army, under supervision of the MAAG, currently includes training in the use of helicopters in counter-guerrilla operations. The Vietnamese armed forces now have 14 H–19 helicopters. The current military aid program includes an additional 11 H–34's, which were asked for for the specific purpose of use in counter-guerrilla warfare. Ten of these H–34's have actually been delivered and the remaining one will be delivered in the near future. During General Trapnell's visit to Southeast Asia [1] he discussed the counter-guerrilla problem with General McGarr, who told him that the total of 25 helicopters appeared to be about all that the Vietnamese could effectively use and maintain. However, General McGarr is being further queried by cable with reference to full exploitation of helicopters in Vietnam and his reply will be forwarded.

Question 2. "Why were the Special Warfare units withdrawn from Vietnam in November 1960? Why are they not being sent back to work with our MAAG there? General Decker, when asked, indicated that CINCPAC had opposed. Why?"

There have been two basic problems in properly training the South Vietnamese in counter-guerrilla activities. The first of these involved both U.S. organization and the manner by which President Diem of Vietnam had organized his own forces. Until quite recently the MAAG was responsible for counter-guerrilla training of only the regular armed forces of Vietnam. The USOM (ICA) was responsible for training the Vietnamese Civil Guard and police. Further, CIA was responsible for training in guerrilla warfare. President Diem, on his part, has in the past been trying to conduct counter-guerrilla operations almost personally and with a complicated fragmentation of responsibilities in the lower levels. The conduct of operations in any particular area which involved primarily local resources, including the Civil Guard and police, were supposedly coordinated by the political head of the area. If regular armed forces were involved, the operations were supposedly coordinated by the military region commander. During the past year, however, great progress has been made both in the simplification of U.S. responsibilities and in the Vietnamese organization. The MAAG, Vietnam developed a comprehensive Counter-insurgency Plan [2] which was finally approved by

[1] Lieutenant General Thomas J.H. Trapnell, USA, visited Vietnam, March 16–17, on McNamara's orders to review the insurgent threat. A copy of his report to the JCS on the visit, JCSM 202–61, March 28, is in Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OASD/ISA Files: FRC 64 A 2382, VN 1961, 370.5–384. A record of the discussion of the report at a meeting of the Secretary of Defense and the JCS on March 27 (I–18283/61) is in Department of State, Bundy Files, 1961 Chron. In a similar mission, Colonel Fleuch visited Vietnam, March 31–April 7, to review the Viet Cong threat. A copy of his 13-page report is in Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OASD/ISA Files: FRC 64 A 2382, VN 1961, 310.1–333.

[2] Document 1.

the Country Team and later in Washington. At the same time, President Diem—despite the fact that he has not yet agreed to all aspects of the Counter-insurgency Plan—has moved forward considerably and has assigned primary responsibility for counter-guerrilla action to the Ministry of Defense and has also put training of the Civil Guard under the same Ministry. This has greatly facilitated MAAG training in this field.

The second complicating problem has been the limitation in numbers on the size of MAAG, Vietnam, deriving from the "legal" requirements of the Geneva settlement of Indochina in 1954. The settlement permits no increase in foreign military in Vietnam above the number there at the time the settlement was made. It has been the U.S. position for the past years that the MAAG should not exceed 685. Conceivably the figure could be recomputed now because of reduction in the French military there.

In March 1960 the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, noting the deteriorating situation in Vietnam, offered MAAG, Vietnam through the JCS and CINCPAC a "Cold War Task Force," consisting of 156 Special Forces personnel and 19 Civil Affairs, psychological and intelligence specialists. However, because of the personnel ceilings on the MAAG, mentioned above, only 30 U.S. Army Special Forces personnel could be accepted of the overall proposed Task Force. Teams of these Special Forces personnel were used to instruct elements of the Vietnamese armed forces in counter-guerrilla warfare during the period May through November 1960. As Vietnamese instructors were trained, they assisted each Special Forces team and gradually assumed a larger share of instruction as they became qualified. Since becoming fully qualified these Vietnamese instructors have been working under MAAG, Vietnam supervision to continue training of others in their specialties. As we understand it, this training is moving ahead quite effectively and the training load is being adequately carried.

Because of the current limitation on the size of the MAAG, Vietnam, General McGarr must carefully balance the makeup of his personnel against his over-all training requirements. However, he is now in the process of reassessing the situation and will report if he believes more Special Forces type personnel are needed and can be accommodated within the ceiling. Presuming that the current ceiling is not changed, it is possible that it could be evaded by various subterfuges, but it has so far been the policy of the Country Team to require the MAAG to remain within its ceiling.

The Cold War Task Force of the size originally offered by the Army in 1960 is still available for employment in South Vietnam if desired.

[Here follow questions 3–7 which deal with other subjects.]

25. Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, Washington, April 8, 1961 [1]

SUBJECT

Call of the Ambassador of Viet-Nam on Mr. Steeves

PARTICIPANTS

His Excellency Tran Van Chuong, Ambassador of Viet-Nam
Mr. John M. Steeves, Acting Assistant Sec'y for Far Eastern Affairs
Mr. Chalmers B. Wood, Officer in Charge, Viet-Nam Affairs
Mr. Samuel O. Ruff, Foreign Affairs Officer

Ambassador Chuong called on Mr. Steeves to inquire about the SEATO Meeting which he (Mr. Steeves) had attended and about the conversations which had taken place between the President and Mr. Macmillan on Viet-Nam. [2]

Mr. Steeves replied that he was particularly happy to have the chance to explain to the Ambassador because the developments had a very vital bearing on his country's interests. He said that in one conversation with our British colleagues we had tried to focus our attention on the larger issue of security in Southeast Asia as a whole. We had dramatized to them the fact that the place where more of our friends were being directly attacked and killed by the Communists was in Viet-Nam. We informed them of the things we intended to do in Viet-Nam, our plans for stepped-up assistance, etc. They were interested, sympathetic, and cooperative.

The Ambassador wanted to know if we had an understanding about what should be done.

Mr. Steeves in reply reviewed the SEATO Conference saying that the members faced up to the fact that they must assume their responsibilities. For example, M. Manach, the French representative, certainly left the meeting with a full understanding that responsibility lay with the SEATO process if there were no settlement. Thailand and the Philippines both felt content with the decisions.

Mr. Steeves then stated that we now have the problem of attempting to find a peaceful solution. Since we are afraid to attend an international conference while military activity continues, we

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/4-861. Confidential. Drafted by Ruff.

[2] British Prime Minister Macmillan paid an unofficial visit to the United States, April 4–8. In a meeting with the President on April 6 he discussed Vietnam briefly, in particular the number of civilians assassinated by the Viet Cong, and Vietnam was mentioned in passing in the joint statement issued on April 8. For text of the statement, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1961*, pp. 545–546. A memorandum of the conversation, in which Steeves participated, between the President and the Prime Minister is in Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 65 D 366, CF 1833.

have taken a firm stand that a cease-fire must be de facto in effect. As to the current situation, we are disturbed that one prong of the PL near Paksane is close to cutting Laos in two. On the other hand, two days ago the Government of Laos dropped paratroops at Muong Kassy.

The Ambassador then urged that it was necessary to keep on fighting and defending to the last moment; he was encouraged to see that our side had not stopped before the conference. He then addressed himself to an item from the press which he thought needed comment:

Chinese troops. He had been disturbed by editorials which cited the danger that Chinese troops would enter the conflict. He thought that the press misunderstood the fact that Red China, the USSR, the Pathet Lao, and the Viet-Minh were all fingers on the same hand. The Chinese do not have to send troops directly into Laos because Communist cadres have been trained in North Viet-Nam for the last fifteen years. The enemy can inject this nucleus into Laos with no trouble at all because they speak the same language, have trained with the Pathet Lao, etc. He recalled that he had seen Souphanouvong in Hanoi in 1945 when he attended a meeting to help in the organization of Viet-Minh in Laos.

The Ambassador then urged the necessity of having more troops in Viet-Nam; not American Marines, but Asiatics who know the terrain. He thought that the US understood the military situation very well but had hesitated for years on an increase in the Vietnamese army. He then asked for confirmation if it were correct that we had recently given his country an offer of help of $41 million, on condition that the Vietnamese make a counter effort which he said would involve 1,500 million piastres. Mr. Steeves confirmed this. The Ambassador closed with an eloquent plea for help of various kinds saying that his people were still ready and willing to fight to defend themselves. He said that his government was glad to make reforms such as land reforms, etc., but he was afraid that reforms would be ineffectual unless they were backed up in depth with means of resettlement, farm machinery, etc., intimating that the US could help along other lines.

26. Memorandum From the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) [1]

JCSM-228-61 *Washington, April 11, 1961.*

SUBJECT

Recommendations on South Vietnam

1. On 28 March 1961, Lieutenant General T. J. H. Trapnell submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a report and ten recommendations on the situation in South Vietnam. [2] These recommendations were:

a. US should support Counterinsurgency Plan and promote its acceptance by the Government of Vietnam.
b. Decide and direct military matters through military rather than Country Team channels.
c. Avoid reduction in MAAG strength.
d. Provide Defense Support funds on same basis for 170,000 force as for 150,000.
e. Provide MAP support for entire 68,000 Civil Guard.
f. Provide MAP POL support for Civil Guard.
g. Provide MAP support for British-made personnel carriers and scout cars.
h. Expedite immediate shipment by air of 12,000 M1 carbines.
i. Expedite shipment of 625 AN/GRC-9 and 2245 AN/PRC-10 radios, 80 RS-6 radios and 80 GN-43 generators.
j. Expedite shipment of 3000 Claymore anti-personnel mines.

2. On 31 March 1961, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the recommendations listed in subparagraphs 1 a, b and *i* above and requested the Secretary of Defense to take action deemed appropriate. [3] The recommendations listed in subparagraphs 1 d, e, f and g above were forwarded to CINCPAC for comment and recommendation. The recommendations listed in subparagraphs 1 h, i, and j above were referred to CINCPAC for action deemed appropriate, with advice to the Joint Chiefs of Staff of action taken, and of requirements for further assistance on such action.

3. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have received and considered the comments of CINCPAC, and his reports on action taken. [4] The Joint Chiefs of Staff approve the Trapnell recommendations below subject to the following considerations:

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 71 A 6489, VN(Sensitive) Secret. Printed also in *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pp. 19–21. The source text bears the stamp "Sec Def has seen".

[2] See footnote 3, Document 24.

[3] A copy of JCSM-202-61, March 31, is in Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 71 A 6489, VN(Sensitive).

[4] Not further identified.

a. Provide Defense Support funds on same basis for 170,000 force as for 150,000. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have taken due cognizance of the primary functions and responsibilities assigned to the State Department and ICA in determining the source and allocation of Defense Support funds. However, the Government of Vietnam apparently feels it cannot provide the financial support required in the Counterinsurgency Plan. Furthermore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff feel that prompt acceptance of the Counterinsurgency Plan by the Government of Vietnam is a matter of overriding concern in that country's present critical situation. Therefore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff request the Secretary of Defense to take action to the end that Defense Support funds are provided for a 170,000 man force on the same basis as that now provided for 150,000.

b. Provide MAP support for entire 68,000 Civil Guard. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend approval for provision of MAP material and supplies within the limits of the current FY 61 MAP, to carefully selected Civil Guard units beyond the 32,000 ceiling currently authorized MAP support. Furthermore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend full MAP support for 68,000 Civil Guard be initiated in FY 62, and approximately $20 million be added to the Pacific Command FY 62 MAP ceiling to support this.

c. Provide MAP POL support for Civil Guard. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend approval for provision of MAP POL to the Civil Guard.

d. Provide MAP support for British-make personnel carriers and scout cars. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend approval for MAP support of British vehicles in Vietnam to the extent only of providing general supply and repair parts of items common to the MAP.

4. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that the increased US contributions to the Government of Vietnam, proposed above, be appropriately exploited by US representatives in Vietnam to induce that government's acceptance of the Counterinsurgency Plan.

5. The Joint Chiefs of Staff note that CINCPAC has taken appropriate action to implement the recommendations of General Trapnell:

a. To airlift 12,000 carbines.
b. To expedite shipment of needed radios and generators.
c. To expedite shipment of Claymore mines.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff
L.L. Lemnitzer
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

27. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President [1]

Washington, April 12, 1961.

Now that the Viet-Nam election is over, [2] I believe we must turn to gearing up the whole Viet-Nam operation. Among the possible lines of action that might be considered at an early high level meeting are the following:

1. The appointment of a full time first-rate back-stop man in Washington. McNamara, as well as your staff, believes this to be essential.

2. The briefing of our new Ambassador, Fritz Nolting, including sufficient talk with yourself so that he fully understands the priority you attach to the Viet-Nam problem.

3. A possible visit to Viet-Nam in the near future by the Vice President.

4. A possible visit to the United States of Mr. Thuan, acting Defense Minister, and one of the few men around Diem with operational capacity and vigor.

5. The sending to Viet-Nam of a research and development and military hardware team which would explore with General McGarr which of the various techniques and gadgets now available or being explored might be relevant and useful in the Viet-Nam operation.

6. The raising of the MAAG ceiling, which involves some diplomacy, unless we can find an alternative way of introducing into the Viet-Nam operation a substantial number of Special Forces types.

7. The question of replacing the present ICA Chief in Viet-Nam, who, by all accounts, has expended his capital. We need a vigorous man who can work well with the military, since some of the rural development problems relate closely to guerrilla operations.

8. Settling the question of the extra funds for Diem.

9. The tactics of persuading Diem to move more rapidly to broaden the base of his government, as well as to decrease its centralization and improve its efficiency.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Vietnam Working Group Files: Lot 66 D 193, 20 US Govt. GVN 1961. Secret. Printed also in *Declassified Documents, 1975*, p. 329B. Attached to the source text was a note initialed by Anderson which reads: "Mr. Nolting, this is further evidence of high-level interest in your country." The note was also initialed by Nolting.

[2] In the presidential elections held April 9 Diem gained nearly 90 percent of the vote against two other opponents and was elected for the term 1961–1966. Documentation on the election is in Department of State, Central File 751K.00.

Against the background of decisions we should urgently take on these matters, you may wish to prepare a letter to Diem which would not only congratulate him, reaffirm our support, and specify new initiatives we are prepared to take, but would make clear to him the urgency you attach to a more effective political and morale setting for his military operation, now that the elections are successfully behind him.

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28. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, April 12, 1961—4 p.m.

1596. I saw SecState Presidency Thuan April 11 on following.

1) I took up AP story along lines instructions Dept's 1250.[2] I reminded Thuan Secretary at Bangkok had emphasized that implementation CIP would require closest US–GVN cooperation and if further stories like AP's get out Dept may be forced to tell whole CIP story which much larger than question 20,000 increase. Thuan showed he was embarrassed but made no comment.

2) Thuan, in answer my query, stated GVN has been considering establishment in RVNAF of something along lines Political Commissar System used by GRC as psywar measure in order build up morale of troops. I said if system similar to GRC's, would include organization for spying on commanders and troops with channel of authority completely separate from normal command channel. I pointed out that CIP recommendations included surfacing operations of Can Lao Party in order get away from unfortunate secrecy which generated disgruntlement and mistrust. Thuan denied system being considered would operate as spy outfit. He said some system is necessary to explain to common soldiers commie tactics and give proper political guidance as commies have had some success in infiltrating army. Later that evening I discussed question with General Khanh, the officer sent to Taiwan to study and report on GRC

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/4-1261. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Dated April 6, telegram 1250 summarized an April 6 AP report that the United States had approved a 20,000-man increase. The telegram advised the Embassy in Saigon to inform the Vietnamese Government that such stories would make approval of the whole counterinsurgency plan more difficult. (*Ibid.*, 751K.5-MSP/4-661) For text of the AP report, see the *New York Times*, April 7, 1961, p. 5.

system. He assured me if GVN adopts similar system any secret reports would pass through regular channels to co of even small outfits. Therefore would not generate disgruntlement.

3) I expressed hope Diem would announce reforms soonest. Thuan said he thought Diem would do so by April 30 (presidential inauguration date). I said it should be done sooner. Thuan then said reforms probably will be announced by April 15, but pleaded presence large number correspondents had so absorbed GVN that many things left undone for moment. I told him increasing number of Vietnamese expressing doubts as to whether any reform measures are indeed to be taken and stressed need for urgency. (It obvious that date reforms to be announced still not clear.)

4) I suggested to Thuan that although GVN had been successful in carrying out election despite announced commie desire disrupt it to maximum possible extent, it now important keep guard up for possible intensified VC efforts. Thuan assured me GVN had this in mind. He stated that although VC had harassed GVN somewhat during election period, GVN had also harassed VC to very considerable extent.

Durbrow

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29. Memorandum on the Substance of Discussion at a Department of State–Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, Washington, April 14, 1961, 11:30 a.m.[1]

[Here follows discussion of the first agenda item.]

II. Vietnamese Elections and Security Situation

In reporting on the Vietnamese elections, Mr. Jenkins[2] remarked that they could be considered a significant victory for President Diem. An analysis of the returns indicate that he was able to hold the countryside in spite of Viet-Cong actions. Countrywide, there had been a turnout of about 90%. On the other hand, in Saigon the turnout was only 75%. Diem had received about 80% of the votes cast in Saigon he had received only 64%. This was probably due to

[1] Source: Department of State, Joint JCS Meetings. Top Secret. Drafted by [illegible] on April 17. The report was approved by the Department of State on April 18 and by the Department of Defense on April 19.

[2] Alfred E. Jenkins, Deputy Director, Office of Far Eastern Affairs, Department of State.

the fact that opposition candidates were better known in the urban areas. There was no evidence of any blatant frauds in the election.

From a security point of view, the GVN armed forces had done surprisingly well. Though the Viet-Cong had attacked at several points, the situation was kept under control by GVN countermeasures and the Viet-Cong efforts had had little effect on the vote.

Mr. Jenkins remarked that the GVN had begun to release a good deal more information on Viet-Cong activities and the Government's own countermeasures. There had been an increase in our own press reporting on insurgency activities in Vietnam, but this probably resulted largely from the presence of a good number of press people in Vietnam who were essentially there to cover the elections.

Admiral Russell [1] asked whether we are really supporting Diem and, if so, in view of his election victory, shouldn't we publicly affirm our support for him. Mr. Jenkins reported that we do continue to support Diem and that the Department is trying to arrange for President Kennedy to send a personal message to President Diem at the time of the latter's inauguration.

In connection with Admiral Russell's query, Mr. Rostow noted that in the next several weeks the Executive Branch will be taking another concerted look at the entire Vietnamese problem. One of the items that must be faced up to is the Geneva Accord as it relates to Vietnam. Current thinking is that we should disengage ourselves from the continued support of and adherence to the Geneva Accords since others are openly violating them. Mr. Jenkins remarked that the State Department's legal people feel that we can probably do so, particularly since we are not signatories to the Accords and since some of the signatory nations are grossly violating them.

[Here follows the remainder of the memorandum.]

[1] Admiral James S. Russell, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations.

30. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President [1]

Washington, April 15, 1961

SUBJECT

Durbrow on Alsop on Diem on Viet Nam

1. It is the general consensus that Joe was exercising his great talent for needling ambassadors, and that, understandably, Durbrow has reacted with some force—perhaps excessive force. [2]

2. It would be unwise for us to instruct Durbrow, in his final days in Saigon, to issue the kind of ultimatum he suggests. We shall have to negotiate with Diem on these matters with strength and tact, but this is not the moment nor the setting in which to do it. Durbrow should relax with Diem from here on out and leave the arm-twisting to men with fresh capital.

3. In terms of substance, the showcase province is a special case because of Thao's great capabilities, but it is also one of the most difficult provinces. They are not all like Thao, but he's done well with a tough area.

4. On the issue of centralization and decentralization, the Counter-Insurgency Plan calls for some elements of decentralization, but we would back Durbrow in his view that the centralization of intelligence and planning of counter-guerrilla operations is required.

5. The whole incident underlines the extreme urgency of getting our Viet-Nam program moving with new faces, enlarged resources, and renewed conviction. Perhaps a visit to the field by a Washington team to see what is going on, is called for. I gather that McNamara would like to go himself or send Gilpatric with Lansdale.

6. Nolting arrives here as of Wednesday, April 19, and we should, I believe, set aside time for a major meeting on Viet Nam next week.

7. On Lansdale as Ambassador, he may have been good. I believe so, but Diem never had to deal with him when he bore the full burden of an Ambassador, with all the awkward inevitable

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Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Secret. Printed also in *Declassified Documents, 1975*, p. 329C.

[1] In telegram 1589 from Saigon, April 12, Durbrow reported on his talks with Joseph Alsop during the latter's recent visit to Vietnam. Alsop told Durbrow that Diem, in a 2-hour discussion, criticized the United States for not properly backing him. Durbrow suggested that the Department send him instructions to the effect that unless Diem began to implement the CIP, the United States would not provide MAP aid for a force increase. (Department of State, Central Files, 951K.62/4-1261; also printed in *Declassified Documents, 1975*, p. 317A)

problems of negotiation. I think we must go with Nolting, whom I know well personally. You will find him a man of rare strength and character. But I am sure we must find a way to send Lansdale for a visit to Viet-Nam soon in a way that will strengthen Nolting's hand—not weaken it. This is wholly possible.[3]

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[3] A memorandum to Rostow, presumably from Komer, dated April 14, reads:

"General Lansdale telephoned following message. Reference the Alsop telegram, Joe is expert at using the needle on Ambassadors and this is some evidence of it. Probably Durbrow wrote this message too soon afterwards while still in somewhat of a state of shock.

"Secondly, I think there is an obvious personality clash type of involvement in which Durbrow is involved with the President out there and this would make it a mistake to have him the one to go in and lay down the law to the President, as he requested the Department instruct him to do.

"Thirdly, I think the best answer might be some prompt Executive action and it would be the best answer to meet either forthcoming criticisms as they come or to do what probably the Boss would like to do now. Along these lines, I would suggest I would like to see Rostow, and either McNamara or Gilpatric, and myself go out for a quick visit for the President, and either [sic] pull Alexis Johnson from Bangkok for a meeting with us in Saigon, and maybe spend a couple of days talking to people and finding out where things stand today and advising some action we can start working with." (Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series)

III. CREATION OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE ON VIETNAM AND THE DRAFTING OF A PROGRAM OF ACTION ON VIETNAM, APRIL–MAY

31. Editorial Note

At the Cabinet meeting at 11 a.m. on April 20, President Kennedy directed that Roswell L. Gilpatric, Deputy Secretary of Defense, personally head a Presidential Task Force on Vietnam. Secretary of Defense McNamara so informed Gilpatric later that day, and during the afternoon of April 20 sent a memorandum to the President stating that he had arranged for the preparation of

"A program of action to prevent Communist domination of South Viet-Nam. Mr. Gilpatric will personally direct the preparation of this plan. We expect to have it ready for your review on Friday, April 28." (Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series)

Membership in the Task Force consisted of Gilpatric, Lansdale (Operations), Colonel Edwin F. Black, Military Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Executive Secretary and Defense Department Representative), Rostow (White House Representative), Major General Charles H. Bonesteel III, Secretary of the General Staff, United States Army (JCS Representative), Thomas C. Sorenson, Deputy Director, USIA, U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Under Secretary of State; and for the CIA, Desmond FitzGerald. For a record of the first meeting of the Task Force, see Document 33.

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32. Program for the Presidential Task Force on Vietnam[1]

Washington, April 22, 1961

PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE PROGRAM

A. Goal: To counter the Communist influence and pressure upon the development and maintenance of a strong, free South Vietnam.

[illegible]

B. National Plan

I. Political

a. Continue current operations of the Country Team to achieve the above goal, with review by the Director of the Task Force to determine changes and emphasis to fit Task Force actions.

b. To lessen the danger of a coup and to strengthen political administration, the U.S. should take measures to bring about a healthy non-Communist political party structure. Parties should be surfaced. The formation of two major parties should be encouraged.

c. To help in stronger U.S. actions, eliminate U.S. restrictions upon the number of U.S. military personnel in Vietnam, under the terms of the 1954 Geneva Agreement, as necessary.

d. Assist the Vietnamese government with special ideas to make it more responsive to the needs of its people. Introduce philosophy and means, such as a Presidential Complaints and Action Commission in Vietnamese terms.

e. Other nations, as a factor in achieving political objectives of the Task Force goal, must be considered in terms of the Communists, the Neutralists, and the Allies. For example, Cambodia. Effective measures are needed to deny the use of Cambodian territory for the transit or safehaven of Communist armed forces operating in South Vietnam. U.S. personnel (political and military) from the U.S. Embassy, Phnom Penh, should visit Svayrieng and other border areas to obtain facts for U.S. actions with the Cambodian government. If necessary a team of Free World journalists could visit the areas and turn the light of world publicity on the situation.

f. Assist the Vietnamese to become a polarizing spirit against Communism in the Southeast Asia region. Encourage closer working liaison with anti-Communist Asian nations. Visits of political, cultural, civic, military, veterans, youth, and labor groups should be exchanged on a stepped-up scale between Vietnam and her neighbors. Existing exchanges of information on Communist agents, couriers, and activists between national policy officials should be increased.

II. Military

a. Continue current operations to achieve the stated goal, with review by the Task Force Director to determine changes and emphasis to fit into special Task Force objectives.

b. Take actions for prompt additional U.S. support, including necessary funding, of military projects deemed to be needed immediately. In this category is the question of pay and allowances for the additional 20,000 troops for the Vietnamese Armed Forces.

c. Introduce selected personnel, most highly qualified in counter-guerrilla combat, into Vietnam to assist in making the Vietnamese effort more effective promptly. Such personnel can assist in selected combat operations, as close-up advisors and assure best possible support. Also, an R&D section of RVNAF could be established, with the help of a small group of practical Americans, to develop and apply new techniques for use against the Communist Viet-Cong.

III. Economic

a. Continue existing operations to achieve the stated goal, with review by the Task Force Director to determine changes and emphasis to fit into Task Force actions.

b. Sponsor the visit of a practical U.S. economic team, drawing heavily on U.S. private industry, to South Vietnam to work out with the Vietnamese effective plans to speed up national development, give Vietnam a better tax structure, and establish a sound basis for foreign investment. The U.S. and other economic plans for Vietnam should be re-examined for sound ideas to be incorporated into a firm new plan, with special attention to early impact upon agricultural areas now vulnerable to Communist take-over.

c. Make certain that transport facilities in Vietnam are expanded rapidly to permit fullest possible use of the small cadre of capable government executives, freeing them to leave the capital, get to a trouble spot promptly, and return to pressing duties in the capital with the least loss of time, as well as freeing the movement of security forces to enable them to concentrate forces where necessary in timely fashion. Light aircraft, for economy, should be considered as one of the means for achieving mobility of government personnel.

IV. Psychological

a. Continue existing operations to achieve the stated goal, with review by the Task Force Director to determine changes and emphasis to fit into Task Force actions.

b. Develop an agricultural area just south of the 17th Parallel Demarcation Line as a "show-place" of democratic action, for its psychological effect on the Communists via the "bamboo telegraph." This project should be accomplished by a combined team of Vietnamese (Civic Action personnel), Americans (Peace Corps), and Filipinos (Operation Brotherhood). Similar projects will be initiated in areas now dominated by insurgents, immediately following troop actions to secure the areas, to boost the morale of the people.

c. Psychologically exploit the rehabilitation of Communist Viet Cong prisoners now held in South Vietnam. Rehabilitated prisoners

will testify to the errors of Communism in a psychological campaign to Communist-held areas, including North Vietnam, to induce defections. Sound implementation of the rehabilitation program will be assisted by U.S. personnel, this requires a team of U.S. Army (Civil Affairs, Psychological Warfare, and Counter-Intelligence), USIS, and USOM personnel.

d. To support maximum U.S. impact prominent Americans who make news should appear in Vietnam during this emergency period in the role of Presidential representatives to participate in selected political and economic activities. For example, Vice President Johnson could make a good-will visit, (or, as alternate, Eisenhower or Nixon could undertake such an assignment for President Kennedy). On the economic side, a prominent personality such as James Landis[2] or George Meany[3] could appear in Vietnam for President Kennedy.

d. [e.] Provide U.S. assistance to the Vietnamese government to carry out an effective psychological campaign against Communist targets, as well as a campaign to gain more active support of non-Communists, both inside Vietnam and in surrounding countries. More effective programming, increased signal strength (the South lags far behind the 100 kilowatt transmitters of the North), and better coverage of target areas are indicated as immediate needs. Available U.S. mobile transmitters and staffs should be put on these targets.

[2] Special Assistant to the President.
[3] President of the AFL-CIO.

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33. Draft Notes on the First Meeting of the Presidential Task Force on Vietnam, the Pentagon, Washington, April 24, 1961, 10 a.m.[1]

I accompanied Deputy Under Secretary Johnson and Assistant Secretary McConaughy to this meeting which was under the Chairmanship of Deputy Secretary of Defense Gilpatric. Among those present were Mr. Nitze, RAdm. Heinz, General Lansdale, Col. Black and Col. Flesch from the Defense Department. Messrs. Fitzgerald

[1] Source: Department of State, Vietnam Working Group Files, Lot 66 D 193, 20 General Lansdale V-N 1961, Secret. The drafter is not identified.

and Colby, CIA; Ambassador Young and General McGarr, Chief MAAG, Viet-Nam.[2]

Mr. Gilpatric said that General Lansdale would accompany the Vice President on his coming trip to Viet-Nam and that this week he would be working on a major plan for Viet-Nam to be ready by Friday for presentation to the President.[3]

General Lansdale said that he would be making side visit to Viet-Nam and would do his best to support the Task Force efforts in the field. He emphasized the need for security to prevent leaks and speculation about this new activity. Mr. Gilpatric said that the President wanted one document similar to that which had been prepared on "Millpond".[4] He then called on General McGarr for a report.

General McGarr said that President Diem wanted to see General Lansdale and would like him to stay in Viet-Nam as long as possible. The General then gave a briefing[5] on the situation stressing that the war in Viet-Nam was vicious and brutal and that casualties were high. The Communists were trying to establish secure areas in the countryside and during 1960 Viet Cong incidents averaged about 505 per month and were highest in September. This year they have been as high as 650 in March but the incidents themselves had not been on quite as large a scale and the GVN now has the initiative. In 1960 the GVN suffered 3000 casualties. The figures all came from Viet-Nam sources but were considered fairly accurate. At present it was estimated that 42% of the country was under firm GVN control with the rest uncertain degree under Communist control. He felt that the military problem must first be solved before we can move ahead in the psychological, economic and other areas.

In describing para-military operations in Viet-Nam the General spoke of the country team headed by the Ambassador but stressed that all Americans there were merely advisers. He mentioned the Presidential order giving the Ambassador policy coordination control[6] and pointed out that the Ambassador had insisted that MAAG might send its position to CINCPAC only after coordinated by the

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[2] Colby and McGarr were in Washington for consultations.

[3] Gilpatric spoke from a two page set of remarks which reviewed the purpose and importance of the Task Force and summarized the Presidential Task Force Program, *supra*. A copy of the remarks is in Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 65 A 3078, Vietnam.

[4] Operation Millpond, approved by the President on March 9, was a 17 point program to prepare or improve the U.S. military posture with respect to Laos.

[5] For an outline of McGarr's briefing, see *Declassified Documents, 1976*, p. 361B. Two days later, at 9 a.m. on April 26, McGarr also briefed General Taylor. For a summary of the briefing, see Maxwell D. Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares*, New York, 1972, p. 221. No other record of the briefing has been found.

[6] For text of Executive Order 10893, November 8, 1960, which, inter alia, defined the coordination and supervision of functions in diplomatic missions abroad, see *Cod*

Ambassador. This procedure had delayed for as much as 13 days his getting his own views across to his superiors.

As for the CIP, we were now trying to get full agreement from the Vietnamese. There was no doubt for the need for 20,000 more troops. The Ambassador had finally withdrawn his objection for this increase because of the situation in Laos.

From the military point of view there was a need for a phased and planned operation under a firm chain of command. MAAG now had full control of the training of the civil guard 32,000 of whom were financed under MAP with the remaining 38,000 to get MAP equipment.

MAAG was developing a counterinsurgency doctrine which contained the seeds of an operational plan. As for the ARVN there were 125 battalion equivalents 90 of which were fully committed and some had been in operation continuously for one and one half to two years without training. The additional 20,000 were needed for rotation and to permit training. 65 ranger units and 55 ranger cadres had been trained. By the end of 1965 six ranger groups would have been trained.

Mr. Gilpatric asked about pay and allowances for the additional 20,000. The General pointed out that the President was annoyed that defense support [which] had been at the rate of $155 million was to be reduced to $90 million based on a balance of payment justification. He pointed out that Diem and Thuan said that they can pay for the additional 20,000. In his opinion they could do so to a certain extent.

The General said that the situation although dangerous could be dealt with. If the VC substantially stepped up their activity and they have the capability, the situation could become highly critical. He mentioned the covert introduction at Kun Tum of some 1000 Viet Minh as well as the strikes that were launched across the Cambodian frontier. He referred to the Khmer problem and to the long standing friction between Diem and Sihanouk as well as the Ambassador's efforts to get these two together. The best arrangement would be to a military seal along the Cambodian frontier but this could not be done because of vast jungles and swamps. He explained how the problem was more serious and how it differed from those in Malaya and in the Philippines. Obviously if the Communists should get control in southern Laos they could outflank Viet-Nam and for this reason the coming conference will have dangerous possibilities. He did not see any solution with the partitioning of Laos so the southern part could be sealed off.

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[1] *Federal Register*, Title 3—The President—1959–1963 Compilation, Washington, pp. 420–421.

Mr Gilpatric said we must do what we can to preserve internal security but must assume that we cannot do too much about the Cambodian and Lao problems. The General said that it was difficult to get the team to work together and that we are unable to get coordinated action in Laos. There was much to do in the para military areas, but nothing would take the place of military force.

Mr. Nitze said he hoped we could resolve the balance of payments issue as applied to the additional force level.

The General said that 170,000 would be enough troops and perhaps more than could be taken care of because of lack of officers for the additional 20,000. He said we could hold and mop up with what we have but that it would take 30,000 to keep the border area secure. As for the chain of command, the General pointed out that Big Minh was to be the top commander.

There was then a discussion of the MAAG ceiling during which the General pointed out that if MAAG is to take over other duties there would have to be some increase.

Ambassador Young was called on to comment which he did along the following general lines:

1. Need to re-establish a working dialogue with Diem.
2. Concept of defending the entire area of Southeast Asia.
3. The need to eradicate the Viet Cong.
4. A new political program, and
5. Maximum [redacted] on the DRV.

Mr. Gilpatric said that what we had in mind would not supersede the CIP and Mr. Johnson observed that we need to concentrate on specifics and price out any additional actions in terms of dollars and Vietnamese personnel. Mr. Gilpatric said we need to come up with a program for action in concrete terms.

It was agreed that the Task Force would meet again on Wednesday to go over the draft plan on which Messrs. Lansdale and Hand would be working with various representatives of the Departments beginning this afternoon.

A summary of Young's remarks, attached to a note from him to Gilpatric, April 25, is in Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 71 A 6489, Viet 091. Young subsequently incorporated his views into a four page paper which, at the suggestion of Bowles, he sent to McGeorge Bundy and Rostow. For text of this paper, see *Pentagon Papers*, 1971, p. 312.

34. Letter From President Kennedy to President Diem [1]

Washington, April 26, 1961

DEAR MR PRESIDENT: I wish on the occasion of your second inauguration to offer to you and to the Vietnamese people my personal congratulations and those of the American people. We have watched with sympathy your courageous leadership during your country's struggle to perfect its independence and its efforts to create a better life for its people. The United States stands firmly with you in this struggle and in these efforts. The recent treaty of amity and economic relations [2] and the inauguration of the Saigon–Bien Hoa highway are symbols of the cooperation between our countries.

The progress made under your leadership has caused the Communists to step up their campaign of hatred, terror and destruction by which they seek to further their purposes in Asia. I am encouraged that the Communist instigated guerrilla war failed to disrupt the elections and that in the midst of a perilous struggle your country was able to conduct a political campaign with frank exchange of opinion. Your leadership has again been nourished and strengthened by the mandate of your people. This augurs well.

I look toward a future in which Viet Nam will be able to pursue the aspirations of its people in peace and freedom. I do not minimize the difficulties your country must pass through, but I am confident because I know that as always in history the cooperation of free men will ultimately triumph over tyranny.

It is fitting that Ambassador Durbrow should be present on this occasion to deliver my message to you, for he has worked tirelessly and with understanding for the common good of our countries. I look forward to his return, when I shall have opportunity to hear from him first hand of his services in your country.

Sincerely yours,

John F. Kennedy [3]

Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878, 350 GVN Elections. No drafting or clearance information is given on the source text. Attached to the source text was a brief covering note from Durbrow to Diem dated April 29. The text of the letter was transmitted to Saigon in telegram 1806, April 26. (Department of State, Presidential Correspondence: Lot 66 D 476)

[1] For text of this treaty, signed at Saigon April 3, 1961, see 3 UST 2400.

[2] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

35. Editorial Note

By April 26, drafts of A Program of Action To Prevent Communist Domination of South Vietnam were under consideration. One version, without an annex, is printed in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pages 42–57. Another apparently later draft, but also dated April 26 with an annex, was forwarded to the President on April 27 under cover of a memorandum from Gilpatric, see *Declassified Documents, 1978*, page 147A.

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36. Memorandum for the Record by the Chief of Naval Operations (Burke)[1]

230-61 Washington, April 28, 1961

SUBJ

NSC meeting on South Viet Nam 27 April 1961

REF

(a) Mr. Gilpatric's memo for the President re program of action for Viet Nam 27 April 1961

1. Mr. Gilpatric summarized the referenced report.

2. Mr. Dulles, in answer to a question, suggested that the outcome of the elections did not truly represent the popularity of President Diem, and that in essence the elections were rigged.

3. General McGarr did not believe they were rigged although there was no other candidate. The people, in general, were for Diem. The elections were free. The Viet Cong did try to oppose the election. They bombed polling booths and prevented people from voting but were unsuccessful.

4. It was recommended that there be an increase in the military forces in Viet Nam and the United States pay for it. He stated that the psychological and political actions of the Viet Cong were not being countered adequately.

5. The question was asked how do we get $50m required for the increased costs growing out of the recommendations in Mr. Gil-

[1] Source: Naval Historical Center, Burke Papers, Top Secret, Hold Closely. See *supra*.

patric's study. The answer was to take it from the $1.6B MAP worldwide and ask for supplemental later.

6. Mr. Bowles stated that there is great danger in this area and the situation will get worse. There is a strong need for military measures. Although the State Department received Mr. Gilpatric's paper late and were consequently not familiar with it, their first glance indicated that it was a good paper. Still we have made many mistakes in Southeast Asia—one of them in trying to turn Laotians into Turks. We need to delay in acting on the paper in order to study the problem even though from a superficial look at it the paper appears to be good.

7. The President stated that there would be an NSC meeting on Saturday[3] on Mr. Gilpatric's paper.[4]

Comment: Op-61 and Op-004 please prepare any data that I will need for the above NSC conference.

Op-06 inform Op-03 and BuShips of the substance of paragraph 3.e. on page 6 of Mr. Gilpatric's paper. We must get going on boats which will be suitable for guerrilla operations in swamps.

8. There was considerable discussion on corruption in Southeast Asia and it was brought out that the South Viet Nam Government is the least corrupt of all governments in Southeast Asia. Still the United States must protect itself from malfeasance in office.

9. Mr. Dillon stated that we should use material that is United States goods, as much as possible rather than money because the balance of payments problem is still with us.

10. Mr. Murrow is helping Ambassador Durbrow hold a press conference and perhaps put on a national TV hookup such as the Chinese communists are doing in South Viet Nam. The Vice President is going to South Viet Nam May 9–16.

11. The DoD and other departments may have to go to Congress for additional MAP funds as well as increased funds for United States military—particularly for limited war capability.

Comment: We must have prepared material which we will need in limited war, i.e. material that we do not now have. Op-90 please prepare.

Arleigh Burke[5]

R.L. Fowler
By direction

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[3] April 29.

[4] Following agreement to delay consideration of the paper, the President directed that the U.S. public and other nations be informed of the situation in Vietnam. (NSC Action No. 2411, April 27, Department of State, S/S–NSC Files: Lot 65 D 95)

[5] Printed from a copy that bears these typed signatures.

37. Memorandum From the President's Special Counsel (Sorenson) to the President[1]

Washington, April 28, 1961

RE

Plan for Vietnam

Mr. Bundy, Mr. Bell and I urge approval at Saturday's NSC meeting of only the basic concept of an all-out internal security effort to save Vietnam, indicating that the Task Force Report[2] is only a first draft to be reviewed, reshaped and then carried personally by the Vice President on his trip.

1. We need a more *realistic* look.

To the extent that this plan depends on the communists being tied down in Laos or lacking further forces, on our blocking land corridors through which communist support flows, or on our obtaining effective anti-infiltration action from Laos, Cambodia and the Laotian negotiations, the outcome is highly doubtful.

To the extent that it depends on wider popular support among the Vietnamese, tax and foreign exchange reforms by Diem, and his agreement to the military and governmental reorganizations required, the outcome is speculative at best.

There is no timetable—no clear division of field authority between our new Ambassador and the military, or between U.S. and G.V.N.—and no realistic estimate of long run costs and effect, with many estimates being omitted altogether. Many miscellaneous ideas are vaguely thrown in without any consideration comparable to that given the military and intelligence build-ups (e.g., a U.N. appeal, a 5-year economic plan, "a long-range plan for the economic development of Southeast Asia on a regional basis", etc.).

2. More importantly, it may be necessary to recast this in terms of a *joint plan* to be implemented by both countries only after the Vice President and Diem have come to a firm agreement.

There is no clearer example of a country that cannot be saved unless it saves itself—through increased popular support, governmental, economic and military reforms and reorganizations, and the encouragement of new political leaders. We do not want Vietnam to fall—we do not want to add to Diem's burdens—and the chief purpose of insisting upon such conditions should not be saving of American dollars but the saving of Vietnam.

Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 65 A 3078, Vietnam. No drafting or clearance information is given on the source text.

[1] See Document 35.

A White House officer (e.g. Rostow) should prepare such a proposal for the Vice President, in consultation with Ros Gilpatric, General Lansdale and the Ambassador.

Theodore C. Sorenson[1]

[1]Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

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38. Memorandum From Robert W. Komer of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow)[1]

Washington, April 28, 1961

SUBJECT

Comments on Program of Action for Vietnam

This looks like a sensible putting together of most of the ideas floating around on how to cope with the internal security threat to the GVN. Except for the Presidential task force, I notice nothing particularly novel, however the combined impact of these measures should be substantial, if actually carried out.

As usual in such outline plans, there is far more emphasis on what we ought to do than on the really gut questions—how to do so.

(a) How do we get Diem's indispensable cooperation, or to put it another way, how do we properly motivate Diem? We have not done too well on selling him those aspects of the CIP which call on him to do something instead of us to spend money.

(b) *How* do we gain the cooperation of other free nations in the area especially Cambodia and Laos, in sealing off the borders. This is a lot easier said than done. What quid pro quos do we offer for Sihanouk's cooperation?

(c) If we are bailing Diem out, why aren't we entitled to more? (Page 6) that he overhaul tax system, halt waste of foreign exchange and devalue currency to a realistic rate? To my mind one of the flaws of our Korean operation has been that we always gave and

[1]Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Top Secret. On April 28, Robert H. Johnson also sent a memorandum to Rostow commenting on the program for Vietnam. Johnson prefaced his remarks by saying that it seemed to lack a clear plan of political action for South Vietnam. For text of his memorandum, see *Declassified Documents* 1975, p. 277B.

never demanded. This is war for Diem too, he's got to understand that continued procrastination on his part will be fatal.

I question whether task force directorship should be in Defense rather than State, although I grant that the instrumentalities to be employed are largely military. We must also remember the face we present to the world, and the precedent we would set.

I miss any attention to how we tell the other side that we mean business. It is terribly important, of course, to convince the Communists of this, and to attempt to forestall a parallel intensification of their effort. Here's a field for quiet diplomacy and even a few private threats.

How do we demonstrate our determination in unmistakable terms? At a minimum, why not give Diem now a public commitment that if things get to the stage of overt fighting, we will come to his support. (Like we had to do with Sarit). We should consider ways and means of putting token US forces in South Vietnam as further evidence (if this is possible under Geneva Accords). I know you are already on top of UN angle.

One purpose of an explicit US commitment along above lines would be to guarantee GVN border so that RVNAF's 170,000 men can be more effectively deployed against Viet Cong. To me, MAAG is not yet on top of problem, but still regards internal threat as secondary. We should have a showdown on this, and if necessary replace MAAG chief.

Before we get into expensive radar surveillance (Page 5), do we have any evidence of extensive clandestine overflights? I had thought most VC support came in by land or sea. And don't we need more than a "Junk force" to meet latter?

One big headache in Laos has been that our boys won't fight. Should we consider putting MAAG advisers into operations down to battalion, etc. level? This might be more important than anything else. On this score, I can't over-emphasize importance of having the best American personnel, the average MAAG officer is simply not suited for the type of war we're going to have to fight (Lansdale is well aware of this). Instead of just adding on to 685 now there, we must insist on careful screening process!

Finally, while immediate focus must be on VC problem, we cannot neglect longer-range objective of a viable GVN. Our purpose is not just to conduct a holding action, but to use the time gained to build a structure which will last. Let's not have another Korea, where prolongation of primarily military focus long after hostilities were over leaves us (eight years later) with the job of building a viable ROK still in front of us.

RWK

39. Memorandum From the Ambassador-Designate to Vietnam (Nolting) to the Secretary of State [1]

Washington, April 29, 1961

SUBJECT

Program for Viet Nam

Understanding with Defense

At the Under Secretary's request, Ken Young and I saw Mr Gilpatric yesterday afternoon. There was a meeting of minds, I think, on the major points which had bothered us in substance, procedure and form of the the Task Force Report on Viet-Nam. Mr Gilpatric said that he would introduce the Task Force paper for discussion at the NSC meeting, making the following points:

1. The recommendations for action in the Task Force Report should not be taken as the Law of the Medes and Persians but as authority to a Task Force to carry out, after recommendation from the Ambassador in the field, a series of accelerated measures along the lines of, and for the purpose stated in the Task Force Report.

2. The Task Force program may well have to be altered, either to provide greater US support or to modify the measures therein in one way or another, especially in light of the unfolding Lao situation.

3. Any regional program for Southeast Asia might also cause modifications in the program for Viet-Nam.

4. The President should therefore authorize in general the undertaking of such a program, on the understanding that there would be further NSC consideration of the situation as it evolves.

In discussion, the following points emerged:

1. That the principle of a Task Force organization in Washington should be continued, but that for Mr. Gilpatric's part, he felt that the Task Force should be located in, and receive its major guidance from, the State Department.

2. As regards organization in the field, he felt that the Ambassador and the Country Team should control the timing of the actions recommended, should have authority to recommend changes and should negotiate the steps. The Defense member of the Task Force, if he visited the country, would be subject to the authority of the Ambassador and would not visit the country unless asked for by the Ambassador.

3. Having read the substitute paper which was prepared in the State Department, [2] Mr. Gilpatric thought it watered down too much the emphasis on anti-subversion activity and linked too tightly anti-

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/4-2961. Top Secret. Drafted and initialed by Nolting and Cottrell. Also sent to Under Secretary Bowles.

[2] Presumably a reference to an early draft of the attachment to Document 42.

subversive measures to the political-social reforms which we have been trying to achieve. In discussing this point, Gilpatric agreed that persuasion towards such reforms should continue, but he was leery of making them a condition of our aid against guerrillas.

4. While agreeing that the Counterinsurgency Plan should be promptly negotiated to a conclusion and carried out, he felt that authority along the lines of the Task Force recommendation to accelerate and enlarge this Plan and to shift its emphasis towards greater anti-guerrilla activity should be requested now. The other measures proposed in the State paper should be considered by the Task Force as the situation progresses.

Recommended Tactics for the NSC Meeting

In light of the above, which seems to me satisfactory both in substance and procedure, I would recommend that you agree to the Task Force report, making clear that while some of the analyses might be more accurately done and some of the measures should be further considered, you too feel that a general approval of the accelerated program of action for Viet-Nam is warranted. If in fact the above points do not come out in Mr. Gilpatric's presentation, I think they should be made by you in order that the President will know the type of action which he is requested to take.

Although this point was not made specifically by Mr. Gilpatric, it would follow from our understanding that the next to the last paragraph of the covering note of his Memorandum to the President dated April 27 would be omitted and that the paragraph on organization (Para 9) would also be changed.

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40. Editorial Note

At its meeting at 10 a.m. on April 29, the National Security Council discussed the Program of Action for Vietnam (see Document 35) and approved paragraphs 3a–3e. The NSC also agreed that the task force should revise the program for further consideration of the Council. (NSC Action No. 2416, Department of State, S/S–NSC Files: Lot 66 D 95) No record of the discussion at the Council meeting has been found.

41. Telegram From the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (McGarr) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Felt)[1]

Saigon, May 6, 1961—5:49 p.m.

MAGCH-LO 670. 1. While in Saigon 2 May General Lemnitzer held discussions with Country Team, MAAG, Ambassador Harriman, Ty, Thuan, and Diem in that order.[2] Following are highlights with emphasis on Lemnitzer's statements and questions without repetition of info previously transmitted or known to you.

2. Country Team meeting (Durbrow, McGarr, Mendenhall, Gardiner, and others present)

a. At Durbrow's request I reviewed my trip to Washington[3] noting that: Vice President Johnson plans visit Vietnam in May; President Kennedy indicated if Geneva accords limit capacity to save Vietnam we should work outside them; MAAG ceiling could be increased as necessary; MAP support for 68,000 Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps would be authorized; increase in MAP funding for GVN up to 209 million [illegible] had been proposed; MAP support for Junk Force had not yet been approved when I left Washington; the emphasis President Kennedy and administration are placing on Vietnam and possible willingness to place U.S. forces in Laos and SVN; and my impression that many in Washington were out of date on Vietnam situation and felt election had been rigged (which I tried to dispel).

b. Durbrow cited recent discussions with Diem stating Diem has not yet given three things most needed in Counterinsurgency Plan: A single chain of command, a central intelligence organization, and economic and political reforms. In reply to Lemnitzer, Durbrow stated single chain of command is first priority. Durbrow felt Diem must get more rapport with the people and more protection for the people or he could not defeat Viet Cong. Gardiner outlined Vietnam economic aid situation stating last year 22% economic aid funds spent in U.S., next year under Buy American Act about 65% will be U.S. spent. (In response to question, I had stated in Washington that Sec. Thuan had said the Buy American policy will hurt Vietnam, budgeteers did not agree.)

c. Lemnitzer stated when he left Washington President Kennedy was ready to do anything within reason to save Southeast Asia. We had worked on a shoe string in Laos under a MAP ceiling and had in effect lost time in Laos since last August. There is still time to act

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 68 A 5159, SGN(61)123—Laos Consolidated, Top Secret, Priority.

[2] Lemnitzer visited Saigon as part of a tour of the Far East following the CENTO Council meeting at Ankara, April 27–28. Harriman visited Saigon on his way to New Delhi for a meeting with Nehru on May 5 about the situation in Laos. Harriman transmitted his account of these conversations in telegram 1473 from Bangkok, May 6. (*Ibid.*; printed in *Declassified Documents, 1978*, p. 318B)

[3] McGarr returned to Washington on April 24 for consultations.

in SVN. Lemnitzer would like for once to have more strength and equipment than is needed rather than too little too late. Lemnitzer questioned delay in building up 20,000 force increase while striving for simultaneous political and economic reforms; why not get force increase soonest, save country, and then strive for other reforms. Mendenhall felt other reforms, at least those pertaining to reorganization of government and actions in the military and intelligence fields, equally necessary to defeat Viet Cong. Lemnitzer asked if more helicopters could be used. Affirmative reply given but problems of maintenance and pilot training time cited. Lemnitzer cited possibility of U.S. maintenance teams and pilots in a non-combat role. Durbrow had to depart early; Lemnitzer closed meeting repeating timely military action, training, and equipment (not held up while other things are done) may be only way of saving situation.

3. At MAAG, discussions were held in four principal areas: current military and intelligence situation in SVN, outline of and status of Counterinsurgency Plan, status of operations and training, summary of increasing logistic requirements with increased forces and support of the Civil Guard. Lemnitzer inquired on validity of election and seemed surprised that Diem received only 65% of vote in Saigon–Cholon as opposed to 95% in country as a whole which he considered as evidence of non-rigged elections. He again reiterated that U.S. must save SVN and with the present situation it could be saved primarily by military means. We must express our requirements clearly, immediately, not fettered by ICC, funds, or other limitations, in fact use an over-kill factor. He again referred to possible use of U.S. units in training, logistics, and combat support such as helicopter units. He inquired on intelligence at all levels, RVNAF and Viet Cong communications, source of VC supplies, and VC activity in Cambodia. He seemed impressed most RVNAF units are on operations against VC and not sitting inactive below 17th parallel as some in Washington seem to think.

4. In separate discussions with Ty and Thuan, Lemnitzer stressed time and the lesson to be learned from Laos was the loss of time. While U.S. support in Laos was limited to provision equipment and minimum non-tactical training Pathet Lao–Viet Minh forces were organizing, training, equipping, and moving. He urged required GVN decisions on command structure, intelligence, force increase, and other facets of Counterinsurgency Plan. Thuan cited GVN financial problems in paying increased forces. He also noted Diem had stated need 20,000 more in 1957. Both Ty and Thuan expressed grave concern on Tchepone situation with its threat to SVN. Lemnitzer inquired of Ty, Thuan, and later Diem of GVN counter operations in NVN. Ty said to defeat the VC it was necessary to go outside Vietnam.

5. In almost two hour session with Diem (Harriman, Durbrow, and myself also present) Diem again covered weakness of French, having requested 20,000 increase in 1957, border infiltration, and necessity of protecting roads, agrovilles, and installations (see my cite 1579 of 150927Z Dec 60 [4]).

a. Lemnitzer asked what could the U.S. best do to aid GVN from a military standpoint. Diem said Laos must be saved at all costs, otherwise situation in SVN will become untenable. Loss of Laos will open all doors to mass infiltration or invasion of SVN. Diem attributed lack of FAL effectiveness to French who in effect sabotaged Laos and are plotting against GVN. Diem claims Asians should be used to fight Asians and advocates using ChiNats in SE Asia with U.S. Air Force and 7th Fleet bolstering depleted ChiNat forces remaining in Formosa. Diem cited captured documents which show 2,000 VC have infiltrated into SVN since December and stated need for more troops and Navy craft to protect long open frontiers and coast line.

b. Lemnitzer queried whether SVN was infiltrating guerrillas into NVN. Diem replied efforts had been made without much success because of tight VC and police controls. He cited one recent infiltration by sea of small group which is now in radio contact with SVN.

c. On Lemnitzer query of relative calm during election, Diem outlined VC efforts, counter RVNAF operations, and summed up large vote turnout and overwhelming majority for him as manifestation of will of people without force or coercion other than that of the VC which boomeranged.

d. Lemnitzer asked about the reservists being recalled as part of the 20,000 force increase. Diem said he had already recalled 6,000 but though reservists they still needed two or three months training. Diem raised the question of paying additional troops saying SVN economy does not permit paying additional troops.

e. In concluding, Lemnitzer stated he had been well briefed and he and Washington were fully aware of the seriousness of situation. He again emphasized time and decisions, assured Diem the U.S. was sending its most capable officers to advise and assist RVNAF, underlined the importance of training, and stated the U.S. would do everything in its power to assist SVN in its fight against the VC.

6. This message has been coordinated with the Embassy. However, rather than a Country Team document it represents my impressions of Lemnitzer's discussions for use in your forthcoming discussions with him.

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[4] Not found

42. Memorandum From the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Gilpatric) to the President[1]

Washington, May 3, 1961.

SUBJECT

Program of Action for Viet-Nam

Pursuant to your decisions at the Cabinet meeting on April 20, and the NSC meeting of April 29, 1961,[2] I am submitting for consideration by the National Security Council a program of action to prevent Communist domination of South Vietnam, including and expanding our present activities in the area.

This program was prepared by an inter-departmental Task Force consisting of representatives from the Departments of State, Defense, and Treasury, CIA, ICA, USIA and the Office of the President. In addition, the Task Force had the benefit of advice from the Joint Staff, CINCPAC and the Chief, MAAG, Viet-Nam. The new Ambassador to Viet-Nam also participated.

In the short time available to the Task Force, it was not possible to develop the program in complete detail. However, the program includes a range of mutually supporting actions of a political, military, economic, psychological and covert character which can be refined periodically on the basis of further recommendations from the Ambassador in the field.

(Toward this end, Brigadier General E.G. Lansdale, USAF, who has been designated Operations Officer for the Task Force, will proceed to Viet-Nam immediately after the program receives Presidential approval. Following on-the-spot discussions with U.S. and Viet-Namese officials, he will forward to the Director of the Task Force specific recommendations for action in support of the attached program.)

(You will be advised of any changes as this program proceeds and be provided status reports on actions as appropriate.)

Having completed its assignment for the preparation of this program, I recommend that the present task force be now dissolved.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 611.51K/5-361. Top Secret. The source text was attached to a memorandum from Ball to Rusk, Bowles, Johnson, McGhee, and McConaughy, May 3, noting that the enclosed memorandum was a Department of State draft and that differences with Defense remained to be ironed out. Also attached to the source text was a note stating that Rusk had discussed the organizational differences with McNamara without result and that they would discuss them further with the President on May 5 before the NSC meeting. The underscored sections are additions to the earlier drafts cited in Document 35.

[2] See Documents 31 and 40.

Proposed organizational arrangements to carry out the program are included in the attached paper.

Roswell L. Gilpatric [3]

[Attachment]

A Program of Action To Prevent Communist Domination of South Vietnam [4]

Washington, May 1, 1961.

Appraisal of the situation: After a meeting in Hanoi on 13 May 1959, the Central Committee of the North Viet-Namese Communist Party publicly announced its intention "to smash" the government of President Diem. Following this decision, the Viet Cong have significantly increased their program of infiltration, subversion, sabotage and assassination designed to achieve this end.

At the North Vietnamese Communist Party Congress in September, 1960, the earlier declaration of underground war by the Party's Control Committee was re-affirmed. This action by the Party Congress took place only a month after Kong Le's coup in Laos. Scarcely two months later there was a military uprising in Saigon. The turmoil created throughout the area by this rapid succession of events provides an ideal environment for the Communist "master plan" to take over all of Southeast Asia.

Since that time, as can be seen from the attached map, [5] the internal security situation in South Viet-Nam has become critical. What amounts to a state of active guerilla warfare now exists throughout the country. Despite greatly stepped up efforts by South Viet-Namese forces, the number of Viet Cong hard-core Communists has increased from 4400 in early 1960 to an estimated 12,000 today. The number of violent incidents per month now averages 650, casualties on both sides totaled more than 4500 during the first three months of this year. These figures, while alarming, are also a reflection of increased efforts by South Viet-Namese forces. 58% of

[3] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

[4] Drafted by Cleveland. Another draft of this paper, also dated May 1, and prepared by the Task Force with input from the Departments of Defense and the Treasury, is in Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series. The underscored portions indicate the parts of the Department of State draft that do not appear in the other May 1 draft, while the bracketed portions indicate sections that the Department of State wanted removed from the draft.

[5] Not found.

the country is under some degree of Communist control, ranging from harassment and night raids to almost complete administrative jurisdiction in the Communist "secure areas."

The Viet Cong over the past two years have succeeded in stepping up the pace and intensity of their attacks to the point where South Viet-Nam is nearing the decisive phase in its battle for survival. If the situation continues to deteriorate, the Communists will be able to press on to their strategic goal of establishing a rival "National Liberation Front" government in one of its (these) "secure areas," thereby plunging the nation into open civil war. They have publicly announced that they will "take over the country before the end of 1961."

If agreement is reached on a cease fire in Laos, political negotiations on the future of that country will begin on May 12 at the Fourteen Power Conference in Geneva. However, the April 26th statement on Laos by the Peiping government* indicates that the Communist members of that conference intend to expand the negotiations to include other areas of Southeast Asia. As a result, it can be expected that the Fourteen Power meeting will be prolonged, covering several months or more.

The effect of these negotiations on the situation in Viet-Nam will be threefold:

First, the very fact that the Fourteen Powers are meeting under essentially the same ground rules as the 1954 Geneva Accords, including the concept of an ICC mechanism in Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia, could have a politically inhibiting effect on any significant measures which the U.S. might undertake to prevent a Communist take-over in South Viet-Nam.

Second, as has been their practice in the past, the Communists can be expected to use the cover of an international negotiation to expand their subversive activities. In this case, close coordination of their efforts in Southern Laos, Cambodia and Viet-Nam can be expected. The 250 mile border between South Viet-Nam and Laos, while never effectively sealed in the past, will now be deprived of even the semblance of protection which the friendly, pro-western Laos offers.

Third, the three principal passes through the Annamite Mountains—the Nape Pass, Mugia Gap, and the pass that controls the road from Quang Tri to Savannakhet—lie in Southern Laos. These passes control three key military avenues of advance from North Viet-Nam through Laos into the open Mekong valley leading to Thailand and South Viet-Nam. A Lao political settlement that would afford the Communists an opportunity to maintain any sort of control, covertly or otherwise, of these mountain passes would make them gate keepers to the primary inland invasion route leading to

* For text of this statement, see *Survey of China Mainland Press*, No. 2487, May 2, 1961, pp. 31–32.

Saigon and flanking the most important defensive terrain in the northern area of South Viet-Nam.

Thus the situation is critical, but not hopeless. The South Vietnamese Government, with American aid, is increasing its capabilities to fight its attackers. It provides a strong anti-Communist government and generally pro-American population as a base upon which the necessary additional effort can be founded to defeat the Communist attack. Should the Communist effort increase, either directly or as a result of a collapse of Laos, additional measures beyond those proposed herein may be necessary.

The U.S. Objective. To prevent Communist domination of South Viet-Nam and to create in that country a viable and increasingly democratic society.

Concept of Operations. To initiate, on an accelerated basis, a series of mutually supporting actions of a military, political, economic, psychological and covert character designed to achieve this objective. In so doing, it is intended to use, and where appropriate extend, expedite or build upon the existing U.S. and Government of Viet-Nam—G.V.N.—programs including the Counter Insurgency Plan already underway in South Viet-Nam. There is neither the time available nor any sound justification for "starting from scratch." Rather the need is to focus the U.S. effort in South Viet-Nam on the immediate internal security problem; to infuse it with a sense of urgency and a dedication to the over-all U.S. objective, to achieve, through cooperative inter-departmental support both in the field and in Washington, the operational flexibility needed to apply the available U.S. assets in a manner best calculated to achieve our objective in Viet-Nam; and finally, to impress on our friends, the Vietnamese, and on our foes, the Viet Cong, that come what may, the U.S. intends to win this battle.

The following recommendations for action should not be taken as fixed or immutable, but rather as requests for general authority to undertake, [after recommendations from the Ambassador in the field,] a series of accelerated measures along the lines of, and for the purpose stated in the Task Force report.

Program of Action.

1. *General.* The situation in South Viet-Nam has reached the point where, at least for the time being, primary emphasis must be placed on providing a solution to the internal security program. A significant step which has already been taken by the Country Team to counter Communist subversion in South Viet-Nam has been the development of the Counter-Insurgency Plan. This Plan—a summary

of which is attached as Annex A [7]—which has been fully coordinated within the U.S. Government, has been forwarded to President Diem. Those portions of the Plan which are agreed to by the G.V.N. will be implemented as rapidly as possible.

However, Communist domination of South Viet-Nam cannot be stopped by military means alone. Our military program must be accompanied and supplemented by an equally strong, equally positive political-economic program.

[2. *Political*

a. Assist the G.V.N. under President Diem to develop within the country the widest consensus of public support for a government dedicated to resisting Communist domination.

b. Obtain the political agreements needed to permit prompt SEATO military intervention in South Viet-Nam should this become necessary to prevent the loss of the country to Communism and expedite the development of plans for such a contingency. The United States should be prepared to intervene unilaterally in fulfillment of its commitment under Article IV, 2 of the Manila Pact, [8] and should make its determination to do so clear through appropriate public statements, diplomatic discussions, troop deployments or other means.

c. Determine the feasibility of an appeal by Vietnam to the United Nations for assistance in the counter-insurgency struggle, requesting the U.N. to provide ground observers to help control the subversion and infiltration of South Viet-Nam by the Communists.

d. Obtain the cooperation of other free nations in the area in support of regional measures designed to inhibit the transit or safe haven of Communist subversive or guerrilla forces operating in South Viet-Nam. In particular, secure the cooperation of Cambodia in the implementation of appropriate military and civil measures to prevent the use of their territory for the infiltration of Communist personnel or supplies into South Viet-Nam.]

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES AND COURSES OF ACTION DESIGNED TO PREVENT COMMUNIST ABSORPTION OF VIET-NAM

Part I. Statement of Objectives. There are listed below our chief political-economic objectives in Viet-Nam. In section two (II) the specific courses of action required to implement these objectives are set forth.

a. Develop political and economic conditions which will create a solid and widespread support among the key political groups and the general population for a Viet-Nam which has the will to resist Communist encroachment and which in turn stems from a stake in a

[7] Not attached to the source text, see Document 1.

[8] For text of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, September 8, 1954, see 6 UST 81–86.

freer and more democratic society. To accomplish the following it will be necessary to work through and support the present Vietnamese Government despite its acknowledged weaknesses. No other feasible alternative exists at this point in time which does not involve an unacceptable degree of risk. At the same time, we do not underestimate the difficulties inherent in attempting to effect a major alteration in the present governmental structure or in its objectives. To accomplish this will require very astute dealing between U.S. Government personnel and the Vietnamese. However, we believe that we have the combination of positive inducements plus points at which discreet pressure can be exercised which will permit accomplishment of this objective. We would, therefore, in attempting to achieve this objective, pursue the following courses:

(1) Increase the confidence of President Diem and his government in the United States.

President Diem is not now fully confident of United States support. This confidence has been undermined partly by our vigorous efforts to get him to mend his ways politically and partly by the equivocal attitude he is convinced we took at the time of the November 11, 1960, attempted coup. It is essential that President Diem's full confidence in and communication with the United States be restored promptly.

(2) Strengthen President Diem's popular support within Viet-Nam.

Despite his recent success at the polls, President Diem lacks the support of a large proportion of opinion-making elements in Viet-Nam, as well as the understanding and support of the mass of people. His autocratic methods and his lack of communication with the Viet-Namese people are a continuing cause of concern.

b. Improve Viet-Nam's relationship with other countries and its status in world opinion. While it is vital that Viet-Nam's internal political situation be improved it is also important that its external political relations with its neighbors and with the world community similarly be improved. Viet-Nam's relationships with its neighbor Cambodia are generally bad, nevertheless, defeat of the communist insurgents requires close cooperation with Cambodia on border control. This will require a major effort of reconciliation. Other free world countries should be asked to assist or at least support Viet-Nam in its struggle. Viet-Nam is a Free World problem, not just a United States problem. A series of actions, described in Part II of this section, will contribute to the foregoing objective.

c. Undertake economic programs having both a short-term, immediate impact as well as contributing to the longer range economic viability of the country. The degree to which an improvement in both the internal and external political relations of Viet-Nam can be accomplished will be directly related to the extent to which a

more favorable economic future for the people can be assured. We can contribute to this objective in the following ways:

(1) The anti-guerilla effort should be accompanied and followed up by economic and political consolidation. A broad range of community development activities both in the political and economic field should be pressed forward. Not only should roads, wells, schools, etc. be pushed forward but village political councils should be created and an imaginative communications system should be established, geared to bring the rural people of Viet-Nam into the body politic.

(2) A long range development program. Viet-Nam is essentially a "have" rather than a "have not" country. It has land, resources, and an able and energetic people. If it were not for the Communists Viet-Nam would probably be, like Thailand, economically viable today. We should help it move ahead with a long range development program against the day when the Communist menace has been brought under control and it can press ahead into an era of self-sustaining economic growth.

(3) Assist Viet-Nam to make the best use of all economic resources available. Our capability to assist Viet-Nam is hampered by its own inability to make the best use of its available resources. Fiscal and monetary measures are needed.

Specific actions to forward each of these objectives are set forth in Part II.

d. Undertake military security arrangements which establish beyond doubt our intention to stand behind Viet-Nam's resistance to Communist aggression, mobilizing S.E. Asia toward this end.

It is doubtful whether the Viet-Namese Government can weather the pressures which are certain to be generated by the loss of Laos without prompt and dramatic support for its security from the U.S. Similarly, the extent to which the remainder of the S.E. Asian countries would be prepared to go "in resisting Bloc pressures or in withstanding local Communist threats would depend on whether they still assessed that the U.S. could stem further Communist expansion in the area . . . [9]Although they would be disillusioned regarding U.S. resolution after the loss or division of Laos, they would nonetheless welcome demonstrations of U.S. firmness and might in response modify their appraisal of their own future in due course." (NIE of March 28, "Outlook in Mainland S.E. Asia".[10])

Thus to further strengthen and improve the internal and external political position of Viet-Nam described in a. and b. above and as a complementary action to the economic undertakings described in c. above, the U.S. should endeavor to develop various strengthened security arrangements as set forth in Part III.

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[9] Ellipsis in the source text

[10] Document 22

Part II. Specific Courses of Action in Support of the Objectives listed in the paragraphs listed above.

a. Develop political and economic conditions which will create a solid and widespread support among the key political groups and the general population for a Viet-Nam which has the will to resist Communist encroachment and which in turn stems from a stake in a freer and more democratic society.

(1) *Increase the confidence of President Diem and his government in the United States.*

This must be the starting point of our new approach to Viet-Nam. Fortunately a number of circumstances are favorable: a new administration in the United States, a new ambassador going to Viet-Nam, and the fact that President Diem has received a new mandate. Nevertheless, the going will not be easy. Given Diem's personality and character and the abrasive nature of our recent relationships, success or failure in this regard will depend very heavily on Ambassador Nolting's ability to get on the same wavelength with Diem. But the following actions should greatly facilitate Ambassador Nolting's task.

(a) Presidential Communications

The President sent President Diem a warm public message on the occasion of his inauguration on April 29.[11] A highly classified brief personal message should now be sent saying that Ambassador Nolting is on his way with new proposals for joint actions to defeat the Communist insurgents. (Draft attached[12]) Shortly after he presents his credentials, Ambassador Nolting would present another message from the President which would lay out the broad outline of the Task Force program and would seek Diem's cooperation and endorsement.

Recommendation

1. That you approve the attached message for immediate dispatch to Diem.

2. That you approve the preparation of a longer message to be developed in consultation with the Ambassador containing the essence of the Task Force programs and bespeaking our confidence in Diem and seeking his cooperation.

(a) *Vice-Presidential Visit*

The Vice-President's visit should provide the added incentive needed to give the GVN the motivation and confidence it needs to

[11] Document 34

[12] No draft was attached to the source text. However, copies of similar draft letters, prepared by Cleveland on May 3, are in Department of State, G/PM Files: Lot 64 D 354

carry on the struggle. We would hope that meetings between the Vice-President and President Diem could act as a catalytic agent to produce broad agreement on the need for accelerated joint Viet-Namese–U.S. actions to resist Communist encroachment in S.E. Asia. These meetings would also serve to get across to President Diem our confidence in him as a man of great stature and as one of the strong figures in Southeast Asia on whom we are placing our reliance. At the same time, these conferences should impress Diem with the degree of importance we attach to certain political and economic reforms in Vietnam which are an essential element in frustrating Communist encroachments. Recognizing the difficulties we have had in the past in persuading Diem to take effective action on such reforms, as specific an understanding as possible should be solicited from Diem on this point. Finally it might be possible for the Vice-President to return to Washington with a letter from Diem to the President relating the understanding reached.

Recommendation.

That the Vice-President's trip to Viet-Nam be focused on gaining the confidence of President Diem and on obtaining broad agreement on joint objectives in Southeast Asia.

(2) *Strengthen President Diem's popular support within Viet-Nam.*

The chief threat to the viability of President Diem's administration is, without a doubt, the fact of Communist insurgency and the government's inability to protect its own people. Thus military measures must have the highest priority. There is, nevertheless, strong discontent with the government among not only the elite but among peasants, labor and business. Criticism focuses on the dynastic aspects of the Diem rule, on its clandestine political apparatus and on the methods through which the President exercises his leadership. This is aggravated by Communists' subversive attempts to discredit the President and weaken his government's authority. All this is made the easier because of a communication void existing between the government and the people. For many months United States efforts have been directed toward persuading Diem to adopt political, social, and economic changes designed to correct this serious defect. Many of these changes are included in the Counter-Insurgency Plan. Our success has only been partial. There are those who consider that Diem will not succeed in the battle to win men's minds in Viet-Nam.

Thus in giving priority emphasis to the need for internal security, we must not relax in our efforts to persuade Diem of the need for political, social, and economic progress. If his efforts are inadequate in this field, our overall objective could be seriously endangered and we might once more find ourselves in the position of shoring up a leader who had lost the support of his people.

Recommendation

That Ambassador Nolting be instructed upon his arrival in Viet-Nam to reappraise the political situation and undertake to obtain agreement of the GVN on an urgent basis for a realistic political program along the lines indicated in the CIP. The objective of the program would be to seek to produce favorable attitudes and active popular cooperation against the VC. While the Ambassador's recommendations might well include certain actions directed toward fiscal and monetary reform measures it is presumed that the major recommendations in this area will be developed by the Ambassador in conjunction with the special team of U.S. experts which it is proposed be dispatched to Viet-Nam for this purpose (see (3) below)

b. *Improving Viet-Nam's relationship with other countries and its status in world opinion. There are three major steps involved in achieving this objective.*

(1) *Improving relations with Cambodia, leading to full border control cooperation.* Cooperation between Cambodia and Viet-Nam in border control is an essential means of combating the Communists. Viet-Nam and Cambodia have always had difficulty in negotiation on any issue, especially a complex and politically-charged problem like border-control. In 1960, Cambodia made a major request for military assistance to which we made only a token response. We should endeavor to obtain better Cambodian cooperation, using a step up of military assistance as "quid pro quo". To maximize the benefit to be derived from provision of additional military assistance we should specifically agree to provide 4 jet trainers requested by the Cambodians thereby precluding provision of these aircraft by Czechoslovakia which has already offered to make the aircraft available to the Cambodians. This would forestall further Communist penetration in this area.

Recommendation

That our Ambassadors in Phnom Penh and Saigon be instructed to urge host governments to enter promptly into renewed border control negotiations. The Cambodian Government should be informed in this connection that requests for additional assistance will be sympathetically considered. In this connection it should be informed that its recent request for 4 T-37 aircraft has been approved.

(2) *United Nation Observers*

Because of the failure of the ICC to control subversion and infiltration it has been suggested that Viet-Nam appeal to the United Nations Security Council for ground observers. The Soviets would probably veto any such action and action in the General Assembly would be required. Not only does the provision of United Nations

Observers have intrinsic merit but in any event, United Nations consideration would have the value of focusing world opinion on Communist actions in Viet-Nam.

Recommendation:

That the Ambassador in Saigon be instructed to discuss this matter with the GVN. Ambassador Stevenson might later be asked to explore informally the idea with Mr. Hammarskjold and friendly foreign representatives in New York.

(3) *Contributions of other free world countries toward meeting the Communist guerrilla threat.* The United Kingdom has already expressed its willingness to cooperate in helping the Viet-Namese stop the Communists. It has offered to provide training personnel and financial support. Other like-minded countries, notably, the Philippines and Australia, have a capability in this regard. While the use of third country personnel creates administrative problems we nevertheless feel that others should share with us the responsibility for Viet-Nam. Particularly as we can obtain a British participation we will maximize the political benefits to be obtained within the western alliance by sharing responsibility for this difficult problem.

Recommendation:

That our representatives in Saigon be instructed to prepare in consultation with the Viet-Namese, proposals providing for the use of third country contributions to the training of Viet-Nam forces in counter-guerrilla efforts.

c. *Undertake economic programs having both a short-term, immediate impact as well as contributing to the longer range economic stability of the country.*

(1) *Political and economic action to accompany the anti-guerrilla effort.* Action in this field is divided into two categories, i.e. propaganda and civic action.

(a) *Organizing a New Political Communications Program in Viet-Nam.*

Next to specifying the means, the cost and the resources for interdicting Viet-Cong access to South Viet-Nam and reducing Viet-Cong operations to a minimum, the tasks of rallying the people to the government and improving the Government's relations with the people are the most urgent. A new type of political development is long overdue in Viet-Nam to spark a new spirit. This is something much broader and more relevant than the so-called "liberalization" program.

The government's rapport and acceptability must be strengthened with the following key elements of the population.

The young professional intelligentsia in the civil service, private organizations, and the faculties.

The provincial, district and village administrators who must be replaced or reoriented for democratic, humane, modern style handling of the little people.

Village youth leaders, village councilors, farm family heads, and teachers.

These key groups could reach the general population in rural and urban areas on a personal basis, new means of mass media can reach the population on a quantitative basis.

A realistic political program would seek to produce favorable attitudes, active popular cooperation against the Viet Cong, and cadres to execute the government's programs intelligently. A program would develop "institutional generation" as the means. For example, the program could include establishment of a professional and young Community Development Corps for the whole country, the formulation of political training schools, form a new democratic administrative corps, the development of a mass radio and television system for political communication, the organization and training of teams of young Vietnamese professionals for important longer-range projects such as an integrated electric power grid system for the whole country, and the functional groups required for the National Economic Council, a rice-price stabilization for the large rural population, and expansion of the school system.

Recommendation.

1. We should assign an expert in Asian political development to assist the Ambassador in explaining and developing a political communications program.

2. We should set up a leader grant in reverse for Asians and others with experience in politics to visit Viet-Nam.

(2) *Proposed new projects in the field of Civic Action*

In order to strengthen the will of the people to resist the incursions of the Viet Cong the following program is proposed. USOM/Viet-Nam should be instructed to organize a number of "Task Force Teams" for concentrated work in those rural areas currently subject to intensive Viet Cong activities. These teams would undertake, preferably in cooperation with local communities, a series of short-range, simple, inexpensive projects, the benefits of which can be readily recognized. Examples of projects to be undertaken are: 1) well digging, 2) construction of inexpensive schools using local materiel, 3) construction of markets, 4) introduction of medical dispensaries, 5) construction of simple irrigation ditches, 6) agricultural extension services, 7) veterinary services, 8) strengthening of rural agricultural cooperatives, 9) construction of local roads, etc.

The above and related actions—which would incorporate a maximum of self-help operations—could be initiated on a crash basis. They should be addressed to meeting the needs of the village communities. It is proposed that the "Task Force" pattern of operations of USOM/Laos be adopted. This program was designed to accommodate to the disorganized conditions after the Battle of Vientiane. The objective of the Task Force concept was to provide relief to non-infiltrated and liberated areas and to accelerate self-help in rural development activities. This program, despite numerous difficulties, has achieved satisfactory results to date and presents itself as a most convenient and realistic mechanism for the Presidential Task Force program for Viet-Nam.

In carrying out the foregoing, the cooperation of existing Vietnamese organizations should be utilized to the maximum. In particular the full cooperation of the military would be required.

Recommendation:

That ICA be granted authorization and the funds to move into a rural development-civic action program. This might cost roughly $3 to 5 million, mostly in local currency. Directors of field teams should be given authority with respect to the expenditure of funds including the use of dollar instruments to purchase local currency on the spot.

(2) *Long Range Development Program*

Perhaps the most effective means of establishing Vietnamese confidence in the political and economic future of their country would be for the U.S. to commit itself to a long range economic development program. Under peaceful circumstances Viet-Nam would unquestionably be one of the most rapidly developing countries in the area having the resources, both human and natural, to bring this about. A minimum of $50 million of U.S. development grant assistance can be effectively employed in Viet-Nam over a period of five years. The foregoing sum is recommended as a supplement to current programs as well as those contemplated for FY 1962. They should in their aggregate serve to significantly accelerate the overall development of the Viet-Namese economy and provide some additional social and physical infrastructure support. While not submitted as part of any comprehensive long range development program they constitute unquestionably priority components of any long range program. Contingent upon the Viet-Namese cooperation, assistance can be directed into the following areas:

1. Agriculture—A 20% increase of agricultural output is a feasible 5 year goal. Expanded extension service, additional agricul-

tural credit facilities and greater use of fertilizer are called to meet this objective.

2. Health Services—Present deficient facilities should be expanded through training of additional physicians, nurses and technicians to provide for staffing of hospitals and local health centers.

3. Education—Priority should be accorded to accelerated teacher training programs with an augmented technical-vocational education program.

4. Fishing—The deficient protein content of the Viet-Namese diet can be inexpensively augmented by the provision of additional larger and specially equipped fishing boats to provide for greater range and more efficient processing of catch.

5. Roads—There exists an urgent need for further development of secondary road systems in the rural areas to permit more efficient marketing of agriculture products as well as to assist in exploitation of presently untapped forestry resources.

6. Public administration—To obtain effective government direction of essential public services, public administration training should be augmented at the national, provincial, and local levels.

7. Industrial development—The present Industrial Development Center could be used to expand light industry, through the provision of additional resources and the improvement of managerial, entrepreneurial and technical skills.

Recommendation:

That Ambassador Nolting be authorized to inform the Government of Viet-Nam that the United States is prepared to discuss a long range joint five-year development program which would involve contributions and actions by both parties.

(3) *We should assist Viet-Nam to make the best use of all economic resources available.*

In spite of the increased insurgency, Viet-Nam has been making good economic progress. It has increased production and its exports have been increasing rapidly. Despite a steady decrease in economic aid, its foreign exchange reserves have been going up and are now in excess of its normal needs. On the other hand, GVN revenues are now inadequate, in GVN opinion, to meet the increased local currency costs of further anti-insurgency measures. This presents the U.S. with a difficult dilemma. On the one hand, the enthusiastic cooperation of the GVN in moving forward against the Communists is essential, but on the other hand, if we give in to their request for more aid in support of the military budget this might not only fail to produce additional local currency, but could provide a serious disincentive to GVN efforts to find more resources. More importantly, coming after a protracted U.S. effort to obtain an increased

Vietnamese financial contribution which has recently gained a limited Vietnamese agreement (the Vietnamese have agreed to meet the FY 61 local currency costs of the CIP) a relaxation in our previous position might well be interpreted as an acceptance by the U.S. that the problem is of greater concern to it than to Vietnam. Such an attitude could be highly disruptive to an effective joint U.S.–Viet-Namese effort. They have the means to raise more revenue, including increased taxation and monetary reform, but both of these solutions, particularly the latter, are unpalatable in the extreme to President Diem. However, one thing is certain, payment of Vietnamese troops will receive first priority in the Viet-Namese budget and U.S. failure to provide additional defense support aid will not affect the ability or willingness of Viet-Nam to carry out necessary military actions.

Recommendation:

Having in mind that our chief objective is obtaining full and enthusiastic action by the GVN in its fight against the Communists, a high level team, preferably headed by Assistant Secretary of the Treasury John Leddy with State and ICA members, should be dispatched to Saigon to work out in conjunction with the Ambassador a plan whereby combined U.S. and Viet-Namese financial resources can best be utilized. This group's terms of reference should cover the broad range of fiscal and economic problems. Authority should be given to make concessions necessary to achieve our objectives, and to soften the blow of monetary reform. Ambassador Nolting and perhaps the Vice-President would notify Diem of the proposed visit of this group informing him that their objective is clearly to maximize our joint efforts rather than to force the Vietnamese into unpalatable actions.

d. *Undertake military security arrangements which establish beyond doubt our intention to stand behind Viet-Nam's resistance to Communist aggression, mobilizing S.E. Asia toward this end.*

1. *A New Bilateral Arrangement with Viet-Nam.*

The Geneva Accords have been totally inadequate in protecting South Viet-Nam against Communist infiltration and insurgency. Moreover, with the Communist success in Laos, Viet-Nam and the remainder of Southeast Asia will require dramatic U.S. action to bolster the will to continue to resist further Communist pressures. While there is still time, the inhibitions of the Geneva Accords, which have been violated with impunity by the Communists in both Laos and Viet-Nam, should be done away with. We should consider joining with the Viet-Namese in a clear cut defensive alliance which might include stationing of U.S. forces on Viet-Namese soil. As a variant of this arrangement certain SEATO troops might also be

employed. It should be recognized that the foregoing proposals require careful and detailed consideration and preparation. In addition to the previously cited advantages such an action would have at least two other important political and military advantages:

a. It would release a portion of the ARVN from relatively static military functions to pursue the war against the insurgents and
b. It would place the Sino-Soviet Bloc in the position of risking direct intervention in a situation where U.S. forces were already in place, accepting the consequences of such action.

This is in direct contrast to the current situation in Laos.

Alternatively, there are several potential political and military disadvantages to such an action, principal among these being:

a. The position of the neutrals might well be opposed and that of our non-Asian Allies uncertain at best.
b. The major propaganda opportunity this would provide the Communists and
c. The danger that a troop contribution would provoke a DRV-ChiCom reaction with the risk of involving a significant commitment of U.S. force in the Pacific to the Asian mainland. The French tied up some 200,000 troops during the unsuccessful Indo-China effort.

Recommendation:

That as a first step, Ambassador Nolting be instructed to enter into preliminary discussions with Diem regarding the possibility of a defensive alliance and a formal rejection of the Geneva Accords. Concurrently, the JCS and CINCPAC should be requested to provide an assessment of the military advisability of commiting U.S. forces to Viet-Nam, making recommendations as to the size of the force commitment which would be deemed militarily effective for:

a. Releasing Viet-Namese forces from advanced and static defense positions to permit their active pursuance of the counter insurgency effort.
b. Provision of maximum training to currently approved Viet-Namese forces and
c. Significant military resistance to potential DRV and/or Chi-Com action.

3. *Military:*

a. The following military actions were approved by the President at the NSC meeting of 29 April 1961:

1. Increase the MAAG as necessary to insure the effective implementation of the military portion of the program including the training of a 20,000 man addition to the present G.V.N. armed forces of 150,000. Initial appraisal of new tasks assigned CHMAAG indicate that approximately 100 additional military personnel will be required immediately in addition to the present complement of 685.

2. Expand MAAG responsibilities to include authority to provide support and advice to the Self Defense Corps with a strength of approximately 40,000.

3. Authorize MAP support for the entire Civil Guard force of 68,000—MAP support is now authorized for 32,000; the remaining 36,000 are not now adequately trained and equipped.

4. Install as a matter of priority a radar surveillance capability which will enable the G.V.N. to obtain warning of Communist overflights being conducted for intelligence or clandestine air supply purposes. Initially, this capability should be provided from U.S. mobile radar capability, with permanent AC&W installations established as rapidly as practicable.

5. Provide MAP support for the Viet-Namese Junk Force as a means of preventing Viet-Cong clandestine supply and infiltration into South Viet-Nam by water. MAP support, which was not provided in the Counter-Insurgency Plan, will include training of junk crews in Viet-Nam or at U.S. bases by U.S. Navy personnel.

b. The following additional actions are considered necessary to assist the G.V.N. meet the increased security threat resulting from the new situation along the Laos–G.V.N. frontier:

1. Initiate discussions with the G.V.N. to determine the additional resources [U.S. support] required—to include funding, pay and allowances, equipment and training—to enable it to increase its force levels from the present end strength of 170,000 to 200,000 in order to create two new division equivalents for deployment to the northwest border region.

2. Assist the G.V.N. armed forces to increase their border patrol and insurgency suppression capabilities by establishing an effective border intelligence and patrol system, by instituting regular aerial surveillance over the entire frontier area, and by applying modern technological area-denial techniques to close the roads and trails along the Laos–G.V.N. border.

3. Assist the G.V.N. to establish a Combat Development and Test Center in South Viet-Nam to develop, with the help of modern technology, new techniques for use against the Viet-Cong forces.

4. Assist the G.V.N. forces with health, welfare and public work projects by providing U.S. Army civic action mobile training teams.

c. Initiate the following U.S. Military actions on a unilateral basis in support of the G.V.N.'s efforts to prevent Communist domination of South Viet-Nam:

1. Augment the MAAG with two U.S. training commands—composed of approximately 1600 instructors each—to enable the MAAG to establish in the "high plateau" region of South Viet-Nam two divisional field training areas to accelerate the U.S. training program for the entire GVN army.

2. Deploy, as soon as possible, a Special Forces Group—approximately 400 U.S. military personnel—to Nha Trang in order to accelerate GVN Special Forces training.

3. Assign CINCPAC the responsibility for coastal patrol activities (from the Cambodian border to the mouth of the Mekong River), employing U.S. Naval forces in conjunction with the Junk Force, to prevent the seaborne infiltration of Viet Cong personnel and matériel (into the southern delta area).

4. Review and update, as required by the present situation, all plans for U.S. military deployment and intervention in South Viet-Nam with conventional, non-nuclear forces; including as a matter of priority plans for the deployment, on short notice, of a Marine brigade plus necessary supporting troops to Tourane or Nha Trang.

Action on the foregoing would require prior urgent political consultation with the GVN, Canada, India, our SEATO Allies, and Cambodia.

[4. *Economic:*

a. Additional piaster resources will be needed for the expanded counter-insurgency effort in excess of those which the GVN itself can provide under present arrangements.

While the GVN should be assured of the necessary funds we should make a major effort to accomplish this in conjunction with a devaluation of the present unrealistic foreign exchange rate. It will be necessary to assure the GVN that a revaluation would not result in any reduction of the present aid level.

We should continue to encourage GVN as appropriate to (a) increase tax revenues through improved administration and modification of the tax structure and (b) use its foreign exchange resources more effectively.

The precise level of U.S. support of the GVN military budget shall be determined through appropriate negotiations but the guiding principle in these negotiations shall be to insure that the confidence of President Diem in the wholehearted U.S. support of the counter-insurgency program is not prejudiced. The Country Team should also study and recommend realistic steps to ameliorate any adverse economic effects of more generous defense support.

b. Organize functional field teams composed of public administrators public health officials, educators, agricultural experts, etc., to be sent to pacified areas to undertake, preferably in cooperation with local authorities a series of simple, inexpensive projects, the benefits of which can be quickly recognized.

c. Sponsor the visit of a practical U.S. economic team, drawing heavily on U.S. private industry, to South Viet-Nam to work out with the Viet-Namese effective plans to speed up national development—including goals for each of the next five years—to give Viet-Nam a better tax structure, to establish a sound basis for foreign investment, and to institute specific programs designed to have an

early impact upon agricultural areas now vulnerable to Communist takeover.]

5. *Psychological:*

a. Encourage the GVN to continue liberalizing its public information policies to help develop a broad public understanding of the actions required to combat Communist insurgents and to build public confidence in the GVN's determination and capability to deal with the problem.

b. Assist the GVN to develop and improve the USOM-supported radio network for the country, to include the prompt establishment of the presently planned new stations at Soc Trang, Banmethout and Quang Ngai and the installation of the more powerful, new transmitters now on USOM order for Saigon and Hue.

c. Assist the GVN to initiate a training program for information and press attachés in the various ministries and directorates.

d. Assist the GVN to establish a Press Institute for the training of selected young people for careers in journalism.

e. In cooperation with the MAAG and the Ministry of Defense, make use of the troop information and education program of the GVN armed forces as a channel of communication between the Government and the people in the rural areas.

f. Encourage President Diem to continue the effective "fireside chat" and other getting-to-the-people techniques which were begun during the recent election campaign. Provide maximum press, film, and radio coverage for such appearances.

g. Reorient the programming of the existing USIS bi-national centers so that they can serve as training centers for rural information and educational cadres.

h. In coordination with the MAAG, CIA, and the GVN Ministry of Defense compile and declassify for use of media representatives in South Viet-Nam and throughout the world, documented facts concerning Communist infiltration and terrorists' activities and the measures being taken by the GVN to counter such attacks.

i. In coordination with the CIA and the appropriate GVN Ministry, increase the flow of information to media representatives of the unsatisfactory living conditions in North Viet-Nam.

j. Develop agricultural "show-places" throughout the country, with a view toward exploiting their beneficial psychological effects. This project would be accomplished by combined teams of Viet-Namese—Civic Action Personnel—Americans—Peace Corps—, Filipinos—Operation Brotherhood—, and other Free World nationals.

k. Exploit as a part of a planned psychological campaign the rehabilitation of Communist Viet Cong prisoners now held in South

Viet-Nam. Testimony of rehabilitated prisoners stressing the errors of Communism should be beamed to Communist-held areas, including North Viet-Nam, to induce defections. This rehabilitation program would be assisted by a team of U.S. personnel including U.S. Army—Civil Affairs, Psychological Warfare, and Counter-Intelligence—USIS, and USOM experts.

l. Provide adequate funds for an impressive U.S. participation in the Saigon Trade Fair of 1962.

6. *Covert Actions:*

. . . . . .

In North Vietnam, ... A capability should be created by MAAG in the South Viet-Namese Army to conduct Ranger raids and similar military actions in North Viet-Nam as might prove necessary or appropriate. Such actions should try to avoid any outbreak of extensive resistance or insurrection which could not be supported to the extent necessary to stave off repression.

Conduct over-flights for dropping of leaflets to harass the Communists and to maintain morale of North Vietnamese population, and increase gray broadcasts to North Viet-Nam for the same purposes.

d. *Internal South Vietnam:*

Effect operations to penetrate political forces, government, armed services and opposition elements to measure support of government, provide warning of any coup plans, and identify individuals with potentiality of providing leadership in event of disappearance of President Diem. These operations require especially careful handling.

Build up an increase in the population's participation in and loyalty to free government in Viet-Nam, through improved communication between the government and the people, and by strengthening independent or quasi-independent organizations of political, syndical, or professional character. Support covertly the GVN in allied and neutral countries, with special emphasis on bringing out GVN accomplishments, to counteract tendencies towards a "political solution" while the Communists are attacking GVN. Effect, in support, a psychological program in Viet-Nam and elsewhere exploiting Communist brutality and aggression in North Viet-Nam.

. . . . . .

7. *Funding:* Not all of which will be expanded in 1961.

a. To provide for its own defense against external attack and internal subversion, it has been necessary for the GVN to increase its

defense budget. After thorough consultation with MAAG, Viet-Nam, the mutually agreed calendar year figures—in millions of dollars—at a rate of 35 piasters=$1—for the South Viet-Nam defense budget [over the past few years] have been as follows: [FY 60] 1960, $168.0, [FY 61] 1961, $212.0 which includes the initial costs of C.I.P., and if the program of action recommended by the Presidential Task Force is approved, the [FY 62] 1962 defense budget [will be] may reach $232 million.

Over the same period, the U.S. contribution in Defense Support and PL 480 [funds] local currency counterpart has steadily declined from $155.5 million in [FY 60] 1960 to $134 million in [FY 61] 1961 to a currently proposed figure of $100 million in [FY 62] 1962. The GVN makes up the difference between [the Viet-Namese] its total defense budget and the U.S. contribution [is to be provided within the limits of its capabilities, by the GVN]. Viet-Namese contributions have been as follows [FY 60] 1960, $10.0 million, [FY 61] 1961, $20.0 million. This may [has resulted] result in [FY 61] 1961 in a shortfall of $58.0 million——$212–($134+$20)=$58——. The Country Team has recommended that U.S. contribute an additional $19 million equivalent in local currency counterpart funds. [If this is approved] This would raise the total [FY 61] 1961 U.S. contribution to $153.0 million, but would still leave a shortfall of $39 million. This is almost twice the amount the Vietnamese have funded [been able to fund] to date.

While recognizing that the final levels of both U.S. and Vietnamese contributions to the [FY 61] 1961 defense budget are [still under] subject to further negotiation, it must be kept in mind that in order to be certain that the 20,000 additional soldiers needed for the GVN army are brought into the troop basis promptly, it may be necessary for the U.S. to increase [our] its 1961 local currency [FY 61] contribution by [some $58] up to $58 million piaster equivalent to insure the success of the counter-insurgency plan.

The Presidential Task Force believes that an equitable [recommends a] funding program for [FY 62] 1962 [based on] might involve a U.S. contribution of $145.5 million and a Viet-Namese contribution of $86.5 million piaster equivalent. [This would provide the means for carrying out the Program of Action for Viet-Nam. It requires a four-fold increase over the FY 61 GVN contribution. If the Viet-Namese are unable to provide this level of funds, there will again be a substantial short-fall which the U.S. will have to meet if the program is to achieve its objectives.] However, it considers that final decision on this subject should await the recommendations of the financial team proposed elsewhere in this paper. [To meet the proposed 200,000] If the force strength is increased to 200,000, this would involve an eventual annual [an] increase in the GVN defense

budget of $15.0 million [additional] piaster equivalent [will be required].

b. Over the past few years the military assistance program for Viet-Nam has been as follows: FY 59, $45, FY 60, $44.2, FY 61, $73.6. For FY 62 the Department of Defense recommends $110.0 an increase of $36.4—all figures in millions. This latter figure also includes [includes funds for] increased MAP cost of the Program of Action for Viet-Nam. [Direct that $71 million be added to the current FY 62 Military Assistance Program for V.N. to meet this emergency.] The current military assistance program for V.N. of $68.4 million in FY 62 provides only minimum funds required to maintain GVN armed forces of 170,000 and 32,000 of the Civil Guard. In order to provide necessary new equipment training and other support required for GVN armed forces of *200,000** a Civil Guard of 68,000, Self Defense Corps of 40,000, and support of *400** *additional U.S. Special Force Personnel* to augment MAAG, an additional $71 million for MAP is required in FY 62 for a total of about $140 million. Additional funds [will] may be required for Defense Support to meet the local currency for the GVN military budget—see paragraph 7a.

Estimates to cover the use of the Peace Corps and Operations Brotherhood are being developed.

* The above starred items are not yet approved. The others have been. How is difference between $110 million and $140 million in FY 1962 explained?

[8. *Organizational Arrangements.* For purposes of U.S. actions in support of this program, the President hereby declares that Viet-Nam is a critical area and approves the organizational concept whereby over-all direction, inter-agency coordination and support of the program will be effected through a Presidential Task Force constituted as follows:

Director: Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell L. Gilpatric
Project Officer: Brig. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale, USAF
Executive: Col. Edwin F. Black, USA
Liaison: Mr. Frank Hand
Defense: Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) Paul H. Nitze
JCS: Major General C.H. Bonesteel and Col. R.M. Levy
State: Deputy Under Secretary Alexis Johnson or Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs Walter P. McConaughy
ICA: Mr. William Sheppard
CIA: Chief, Far East Division, Mr. Desmond Fitzgerald
USIA: Deputy Director Thomas C. Sorenson
BOB: Assistant Director, Kenneth Hansen
Treasury Observer: Assistant Secretary, Office of International Finance, John M. Leddy
Office of the President: W.W. Rostow]

[The Ambassador as head of the Country Team is assigned the authority and the responsibility to see that the Program is carried out in the field and to recommend the timing of the actions. He is authorized to advise the Director of the Task Force of any changes which he believes should be made in the Program.]

[In carrying out his duties while in the field, the Operations Officer of the Task Force will cooperate with the Ambassador and the Country Team.]

[9. *Vice President's Visit to South Vietnam:*]

[If the Vice President does decide to pay an official visit to South Viet-Nam, there will be prepared for him a proposed list of matters for him to discuss with President Diem in furtherance of the above program of action.]

8. *Organizational Arrangements:*

Because of the critical nature of the situation in Viet-Nam, and the need for accelerated action, the direction, coordination and support of the program will be effected through a special Interdepartmental Task Force on Viet-Nam, established in the Department of State and constituted as follows:

Chairman: Under Secretary George W. Ball
Alternate Chairman: Asst. Secretary Walter P. McConaughy
Director: Sterling J. Cottrell
Deputy Director: Brig. Gen. Lansdale
Executive Officer: Chalmers B. Wood
Members: Representatives to be designated
Defense:
Treasury:
JCS:
ICA:
CIA:
USIA:
Office of the President:

An Operations Center has been established in the Department of State, under the direction of Ambassador Theodore C. Achilles, to serve as the center for insuring speed, coherence and coordination in United States political, military, economic, information, and psychological actions with respect to specific crisis situations as required. Mr. Cottrell will operate from this center in close coordination with the Assistant Secretary for, and staff of, the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, as well as with the other members of the Task Force, so as to insure there is full coordination of all aspects of the action program, not only within Viet-Nam but with other concerned countries.

The Director or Deputy Director, together with such other members of the staff or Task Force as may prove desirable, may

travel to Viet-Nam as circumstances require. At the request of the Ambassador to Viet-Nam, such additional staff members may be assigned to him as considered necessary most effectively to carry out the program. In the field, all such staff members will function under the general direction of the Ambassador in accordance with Section 201 of Executive Order No. 10893 of November 8, 1960.

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43. Draft Memorandum of the Conversation of the Second Meeting of the Presidential Task Force on Vietnam, the Pentagon, May 4, 1961 [1]

SUBJECT

Meeting of the Presidential Task Force on Viet-Nam

PARTICIPANTS

State: Mr. George Ball (B), Mr. McConaughy (FE), Mr. Seymour Weiss (B/FAC), Mr. Robert Cleveland (FE).
Defense: Mr. Gilpatric, General Lansdale, Colonel Black, Mr. Hand, Mr. Haydn Williams (ISA), Admiral Heinz (ISA), Colonel Flesch (ISA).
JCS: General Bonesteel, Colonel Levy.
ICA: Mr. Sherwood Fine (FE).
CIA: Mr. Fitzgerald and Mr. Colby.
Office of the President: Mr. W.W. Rostow.
Bu. Budget: Mr. Hansen.[2]
Treasury: Mr. Leddy and Mr. Diehl.
USIA: Mr. Sorensen

1. Mr. Gilpatric opened the meeting by announcing that the Task Force proposal would not come up for consideration at Friday's NSC meeting as originally proposed.[3] He suggested instead that a revised draft of the current paper[4] be developed for consideration by the Task Force on Saturday morning, with its subsequent circulation

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[1] Source: Department of State, G/PM Files: Lot 64 D 354: Top Secret: Drafted by Weiss.

[2] Kenneth R. Hansen, Assistant Director, Bureau of the Budget.

[3] At the NSC meeting on Friday, May 5, the Council noted that efforts should be made to reassure Diem that the United States was not abandoning Southeast Asia and that the number of U.S. training troops in South Vietnam, which was included in the Task Force report, would be considered by the NSC at its meeting on May 12. (Memorandum from the Secretary of Defense to the Service Secretaries, May 9, Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OASD/ISA Files: FRC 64 A 2382, Asia 1961–000.1)

[4] Regarding the two drafts under consideration by the Task Force, see *supra* and footnote 4 thereto.

to all interested parties, in anticipation of an NSC meeting on this subject early next week. He pointed out that this would provide a more adequate period of time for studying the full implications of the Task Force proposals. Mr. Gilpatric also suggested that the form of the paper be altered in order to identify at the outset the specific action steps to be taken, leaving the explanatory background and discussion to a separate annex. He further suggested that this annex also embody the funding discussion in the paper. He proposed that two people, one from State and one from DOD, be assigned principal responsibility for undertaking this revision. This responsibility was assigned to General Lansdale for Defense and Mr. Cleveland for State.

2. In turning to the revised Task Force draft, Mr. Gilpatric stated that while he hoped it would be possible to work out a maximum area of agreement we need not be inhibited from showing a split position on major points of difference if such points emerged. In this connection, however, he stated that he personally accepted without question the interrelated nature of the military and non-military actions which were required if the problem represented by Viet-Nam was to be successfully addressed. The need was not to establish an absolute priority of one above the other. We need both working toward the same objective.

3. On the organizational problem, Mr. Gilpatric indicated that agreement had been reached to accept the State proposal as contained in the Task Force draft, as revised by the Dept. of State, which vests the continuing responsibility for the inter-departmental Task Force in the Department of State. He suggested, however, that Defense preferred to have General Lansdale act as its representative rather than as deputy director of the Task Force.[5]

4. In turning to the specifics of the revised Task Force paper, Mr. Gilpatric suggested that the necessary position papers and related backstopping for the Vice President's trip should be handled by the State Department and not, at least in any detail, be embodied within the Task Force paper. However, to obtain a comprehensive picture of the Viet-Nam undertaking, the Vice Presidential trip could continue to be reflected in general in the Task Force paper.

5. As a second point of immediate interest, Mr. Gilpatric stated that the Defense Dept. was concerned over the relationship between

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[5] In a memorandum to McNamara, May 3, Lansdale set forth "his strong recommendation that Defense stay completely out of the Task Force directorship as now proposed by State." He concluded his memo as follows: "The U.S. past performance and theory of action, which State apparently desires to continue, simply offers no sound basis for winning as desired by President Kennedy." (Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OASD (C) (A) Files: FRC 77-131, VN Task Force (Folder 1) 1961)

the proposed 14-nation conference on Laos* and the suggestions which had been advanced for the deployment of additional U.S. forces to Viet-Nam. He expressed the fear that once the conference is initiated the effort will be made by the Communists to tie the negotiations to a general discussion of Southeast Asia which could result in a freeze of forces into and out of the area. He pointed out that a marine brigade could be in Viet-Nam in 12 hours and that this could be further reinforced by army forces in Hawaii over a somewhat longer period of time as requirements demanded. Particularly in light of the projected May 12 starting date for the conference Mr. Gilpatric felt that this point would have to be placed before the President which the Dept. of Defense proposed to do independently of the Task Force paper, although he indicated his feeling that the matter should be referred to by the Task Force as well.

6. Ambassador Young indicated that in discussions with the Secretary of State this morning* consideration was being given to the possibility of a postponement of the opening date of the conference, a position apparently independently arrived at by the French government. In the event of a postponement of the opening date, the urgency of reaching a decision on U.S. troop deployment would be somewhat alleviated though the basic problem remained for resolution.

7. In turning to the question of the formal disavowal of the Geneva Accords, Mr. Ball referred to a memorandum prepared by Mr. Chayes, the Department of State legal advisor,* pointing out that the whole structure of the Indochina partition rested on the Accords. As Mr. Ball explained it, the issue was not whether we removed the inhibitions which the Accords have heretofore placed upon our actions but rather the manner and the degree to which we took such action. Mr. Ball stated that he was fully in accord with the need to move fast on developing a definitive position on this point which he undertook to do.

8. Mr. Rostow stated that he felt that it was necessary to carefully consider our basic strategy, particularly in connection with the pending conference and in connection with the proposal for troop deployment. On the first point he felt that we might consider a focus of attention on the inability of the ICC to protect frontiers developing a highly aggressive offensive to be used in the confer-

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* Reference is to the 14-nation conference on Laos that opened May 15 at Geneva.

* According to his Appointment Book, Rusk met with Young at 9:04 a.m. and with Bowles, Ball, McConaughy, Achilles, and Johnson at 9:19. No record of these meetings has been found. (Johnson Library, Rusk Appointment Books)

* Not found.

ence. Mr. Cleveland and Ambassador Young pointed out that precisely such a position was in process of development with extensive materials being gathered to bolster the effort. On the second point, Mr. Rostow stated that it was essential that we have a maximum degree of clarity both as to the types of U.S. troops which were required in Viet-Nam and as to the precise missions which they would be expected to fulfill. He pointed out that this might be a "plate glass window" or "trip wire" function but that in this event we would want to be sure that our forces had a clear function and relationship to the counter-insurgency effort.

9. Mr. Gilpatric agreed, pointing out that the availability of U.S. combat troops in Viet-Nam could result in the release of indigenous forces pursuing the counter-insurgency effort.

10. Mr. Rostow indicated that he felt that there were largely three alternative rationales for the supply of U.S. forces: (1) a step-up in our previous activities directed against the insurgency movement by involving additional training forces, etc., (2) provision of sufficient force to act as a trip wire and (3) sufficient forces to meet an anticipated major ChiCom invasion.

11. General Lansdale injected to ask how many individuals Mr. Rostow was thinking of in terms of increasing the force capability to meet the first objective, i.e., the counter-insurgency problem, for example, hundreds? Mr. Rostow indicated that hundreds might be appropriate but to be applied gradually as they could be effectively absorbed. He pointed out that he felt that such an acceleration in our current efforts was quite a different matter from putting in U.S. combat units. He stated that this latter action particularly required clarification in connection with Ambassador Young's 14-nation conference.

12. Mr. Gilpatric asked if the Chiefs had addressed the question of U.S. combat troop deployment to Viet-Nam. General Bonesteel said the Chiefs had made an assessment in terms of the Lao situation but not specifically in terms of the proposal for deployment in Viet-Nam. Mr. Gilpatric stated he would like to have the Chiefs' assessment. Ambassador Young stated that it would also be useful to get a JCS judgment on the ability of choking off the Viet-Cong from infiltrating into South Viet-Nam. Both General Bonesteel and Mr. Colby stated their doubts as to the ability to effectively shut off the 1500 mile border. Ambassador Young said that this then raised a question as to why we should pour hundreds of millions into Viet-Nam if we can't choke off the problem. General Bonesteel stated that he believed this brought the discussion to the central point which is, how seriously are we to take the objective which represents the Task Force's basic term of reference, viz. preventing Communist domination of Viet-Nam. He stated that if we are to

take this seriously, we should recognize that it posed a major requirement for very sizeable force commitments. Mr. Gilpatric asked what was behind Admiral Burke's view that a marine brigade would be very useful. General Bonesteel said he could not speak for Admiral Burke but believed that he meant that it would carry important symbolic value as an indication of U.S. willingness to fight. Mr. Rostow stated that it was important that the kinds of commitments and U.S. aid which we provide be clearly directed toward whatever we consider our basic objectives to be. For example, if the threat is from overt aggression from North Viet-Nam we need one sort of a plan. If it is to meet the insurrection we need another plan. Or if it is to choke off infiltration at the border we need still another plan. Mr. Colby referred to the important positive psychological advantages which the introduction of troops into the area would have. General Bonesteel stated that the Chiefs would need as clear a statement of the real national intent as possible in order to give clear policy guidance concerning the commitment of forces. For example, even the commitment of one marine brigade tied down a significant amount of U.S. land combat power and it was therefore necessary to know whether this should be considered a permanent commitment. Alternatively, if we envisage the possibility of "pulling them out" with a clear knowledge and evaluation of the impact thereof, this would be important to know. He stated that he felt that if our interest as a nation is to resist a further Communist encroachment beyond the line drawn in Laos and if we are willing to fight for this objective then the commitment of U.S. combat forces would be worthwhile though a major undertaking.

13. Mr. Gilpatric expressed the view that the Task Force papers should address themselves to these broad implications and various alternatives to troop deployment suggesting that they be thoroughly explored but that the body of the recommendations in the paper be primarily limited to whatever was necessary to meet the insurgency problem. Mr. Rostow said that we must be honest in assessing the ability of U.S. military power to be effectively employed against the Viet-Cong guerrilla effort. General Bonesteel pointed out that it was by no means solely a military effort to handle the insurgency problem and, moreover, that much depended on the nature of the Laotian settlement. He expressed the view that if we wanted to put down the insurgency effort in Viet-Nam, if we had a reasonably workable settlement in Laos, bolstered by the barrier between Laos and Viet-Nam and along the 17th parallel, we could probably succeed. He cited our experiences with the Greek civil war pointing out that such an effort cannot succeed by partial steps. Mr. Rostow commented that in the Greek situation we were dealing with a unified public and eventually with a disaffection of Tito (which

closed off assistance to the guerrillas). Mr. Ball suggested that we not lose sight of the French experience in fighting guerrillas in Indochina. He also stated that the difference between the insertion of U.S. combat forces as such, as distinct from U.S. forces training the Viet-Namese, posed the implication of the U.S. vs. Communists as the principal protagonists as against the Viet-Namese fighting an internal effort supported by the Communists. General Bonesteel in commenting on the French experience, said that the French lost the Indochina effort because of an unwillingness to train indigenous forces above the grade of corporal because of a fear that the forces once trained would eventually throw them out. Obviously the indigenous forces under foreign leadership had no incentive to fight.

14. Ambassador Young stated again that it was necessary to get a clear decision as to what it would take if we decided to hold firm and fight in Viet-Nam. He indicated that he felt the area needed to be looked at as a whole though he acknowledged General Lansdale's point that there were differences as between the neighboring countries, in the people, in their language, etc. He still felt that the area was linked together.

15. General Bonesteel noted that if our policies resulted in the loss of Southeast Asia this would have an impact on all other areas of the world where the credibility of our guarantees to protect nations would be open to serious doubt. He specifically mentioned Latin America and the Near East. Mr. Rostow reiterated his view as to the need to focus on the three most logical alternative objectives for the application of military force (i.e. to fight the insurrectionist movement, as a trip wire and to resist massive invasion). Mr. Gilpatric reiterated that this problem should be recognized in the Task Force paper although its major focus should be on the insurgency problem.

16. General Bonesteel raised a question concerning the statement of our objectives particularly as regards the emphasis which should be placed upon political action in relation to military actions. Mr. Gilpatric stated that he recognized that the two objectives existed side by side with "no clear bright line between them". He stated that the exact blending of the two actions would have to be worked out. Mr. McConaughy questioned whether the two points of view were in basic opposition and Mr. Rostow agreed with the implication of the remark, that certainly this was not true at all or even at a majority of points. Mr. Fitzgerald believed that there still was an unresolved conflict, citing that the 20,000 troop increase had heretofore been held out as a carrot for Viet-Namese concessions. Mr. Gilpatric and Mr. Ball both stated that this matter was settled, that the troop increase was approved and that its exact manner of communication to the Viet-Namese would be worked out in the

negotiation. Mr. Fitzgerald asked how long the negotiation was to go on. Mr. Gilpatric said that would be handled by the people in charge.

17. Ambassador Young raised questions concerning the communication to President Diem. It was agreed that Ambassador Young would identify the key elements in the Task Force proposal which would be communicated to President Diem in a letter from President Kennedy which would be delivered by Vice President Johnson. Mr. Ball suggested that Defense should focus on this letter with State, and Mr. Gilpatric asked General Lansdale to do so for Defense. General Lansdale stated that if it was implied that the letter from President Kennedy to Diem should contain an insistence on Diem's "being a good boy" and otherwise insisting on various conditions this would be exactly contrary to Asian psychology and would place Ambassador Nolting in "the same trap as Ambassador Durbrow found himself in". Both Ambassador Young and Mr. Cleveland indicated that this was not to be the tone or nature of the letter and Mr. McConaughy stated that it was intended to make the letter essentially non-controversial and that Vice President Johnson did not want to get into a detailed debate with Diem. General Bonesteel asked if the letter would have specific reference to the U.S. force contribution which seemed to be implied in the State redraft. Mr. Weiss indicated that it was not intended that this be contained in the letter since the timing would preclude the careful consideration of the serious issues raised by the troop deployment proposal, as indicated by the discussion at this meeting. Mr. Gilpatric said that it would be best to permit State to come up with a draft which Defense could then react to. He indicated in response to an inquiry that the proposed letter would not require NSC consideration.

18. Mr. Hansen referred to the proposal regarding the development of Viet-Namese/Cambodian relationships, asking what would happen if the improvement of relationships failed. It was agreed that this should receive further exploration in the revised draft to be prepared for the Saturday Task Force meeting.

19. Ambassador Young pointed out that we would have to face the implications of what we do with regard to the Geneva Accords, particularly if this involved deployment of U.S. forces as this affected our position in the 14-nation conference, to take action in opposition to the Accords would inhibit our position in the Conference where we might be trying to benefit from the terms of the Accords. The point being that we would have to decide the relative political and military advantages to be gained.

20. Admiral Heinz indicated that we now had firm recommendation on the approval of the four jet trainers for Cambodia which were mentioned in the Task Force paper. It was indicated that the

inclusion of this item in the Task Force paper was not intended to inhibit going ahead with that proposal and Mr. Gilpatric agreed that the item should be retained in the paper.

21. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that the recommendation for UN observers was of dubious practical value. Mr. Cleveland agreed but felt that it was useful to include it and Mr. Ball pointed out that it helped to make the record clear. The question was raised as to whether the observers would be in both North and South Viet-Nam with the indication being that State had been thinking solely of South Viet-Nam on the grounds that this is presumably where the insurgent action was observable. The general consensus was, however, that UN observers should be requested for both North and South Viet-Nam.

22. Mr. Gilpatric noted that the question of a third country contribution was advanced by State. Mr. Williams stated that General McGarr and CINCPAC were opposed on the grounds that this would divide responsibility for training. Mr. Cleveland pointed out that the UK was anxious to come in and assist even if in a small way, that they had a special capability for doing so stemming from their Malayan experiences and that it was to our advantage to share the responsibility with our allies. General Bonesteel stated that his concern was that the British would use this as a means for exercising control over our freedom of action. Mr. Weiss indicated that the British contribution would be quite limited in numbers and size, thereby hardly warranting a major voice in policy formulation. He asked General Bonesteel whether there would be any objection if the British were prepared to provide their technical aid under direct U.S. control. Mr. Gilpatric said he did not see why we should keep the British out and in fact saw advantage to bringing them in. Mr. Rostow stated that in the last analysis he thought that we had our allies "over our shoulder" when it came to facing up to the need to fight. The problem was not in keeping the British out but rather in getting them in and sharing the problem with us. General Bonesteel stated that he did not want to be misrepresented. The U.S. military do not want to fight a war but believe the best way to avoid such a contingency is to show strength early and did not want the British or others to dilute our position. Mr. Gilpatric agreed, but felt that we should see if we can't bring the British in more closely and get their contribution. Mr. Hansen raised the question concerning adequacy of staff available to the Ambassador to carry out increased actions proposed. Mr. Weiss stated it was intended that Ambassador Nolting include an assessment of staff requirements in his initial review of the situation. It was agreed that this matter would be mentioned in the Task Force report. Mr. Rostow stated that he felt a review of current ICA field activities was also needed to see if lesser

priority items could not be deferred to make people available for higher priority objectives.

23. Mr. Leddy supported the position taken in the State draft, particularly that of tying together the total economic and social problem for overall review. He indicated that he also believed we would need a sizeable package to negotiate with the Viet-Namese and suspected that the $50 million development fund was probably understated. He suggested that our position on this be kept flexible. Mr. Fine agreed that the figure was arbitrary and could be considerably larger. Mr. Leddy suggested that the paper might reflect recognition that depending on outcome of monetary reforms "substantial funds may have to be committed over period of years". General Bonesteel stated that as a serious student of this sort of situation, the question was raised in his mind as to whether emphasis on various economic programs might not "be doing too much too fast", thereby distracting attention from fighting. He alluded to our experience in this connection in the early part of the Greek program. Mr. Gilpatric and Mr. Ball agreed that the economic efforts should be pursued as set forth in the State draft but that the long-range development program and stabilization program should be reversed in order of treatment in the paper.

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44. Memorandum From Robert W. Komer of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) [1]

Washington, May 4, 1961.

Putting US Troops into Vietnam

We must seriously consider precautionary measures to "seal off" South Vietnam in such a way as to deter another Laos.

It seems almost certain that the other side will raise Vietnam issues (perhaps reunification) in 14-nation conference. Moreover, Vietnam ICC is still in existence although hardly functioning. Our sending any troops to Vietnam now or later would be violation of Geneva Accords, to which Saigon is party. But we will be violating

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series. Secret. Also sent to Rostow. Printed in part in *Declassified Documents, 1983*, p. 38.

this in any case if we increase MAAG strength, and other side will surely raise hell at the conference.

Therefore as a "half-way house", *why not urge Diem to abrogate Geneva Accords before the conference begins.* After it starts, he will get an even bigger black eye if he does. He could simultaneously apply for SEATO membership, and perhaps ask for SEATO troops. This would establish legal basis for our subsequent entry even if we decided not to do so promptly.

Is Pentagon contingency planning for troops to Vietnam geared too much to sensible military objectives, thus involving forces too large and unwieldy for early action? The purpose of sending forces is *not* to fight guerrillas. It would be to establish a US "presence"; this could be accomplished by no more than a battalion supported by naval power.

Why not invite Asian SEATO states simultaneously to send token contingents? They need not actually send them on such short notice, but we could announce when we went in that they had agreed in principle to do so.

I am not convinced that we should send troops to Vietnam. But I am convinced we should carefully weigh the cost to us of waiting until conference is underway and Vietnamese situation has perhaps seriously deteriorated. Also Diem (as well as Sarit) urgently needs some reassurance in aftermath of Laos; I doubt that VP's visit or CIP alone would suffice.

Bob K.

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45. Editorial Note

Pursuant to the Presidential directive at the National Security Council meeting on April 27 (Document 36), Secretary of State Rusk discussed the situation in Vietnam at his press conference on May 4. Using some of the figures in the first several paragraphs of the Program for Vietnam (Document 42), Rusk indicated the seriousness of the threat and reported the measures which the United States had taken to assist President Diem. For text of Rusk's statement and the questions and answers that followed, see Department of State *Bulletin*, May 22, 1961, pages 756–763.

46. Memorandum for the Record [1]

Washington, May 5, 1961.

SUBJ

Debrief of NSC meeting, 5 May 61 [2]

[Here follow 7 pages of discussion unrelated to Vietnam.]

Viet-Nam

52. The next subject was troops in South Viet-Nam. Mr. Rusk stated that if the United States troops were put in South Viet-Nam it could complicate the forthcoming conference. [3] It was agreed that there should be some sort of SEATO Standing Force in Thailand. That possibility has been raised in SEATO circles. I had never heard about this particular SEATO Standing Force before.

53. It was then asked if we were giving assurances to Sarit and Diem. The answer was yes.

54. They came back to the question of troops in South Viet-Nam. It was said that if the conference once gets going and then trouble starts, we can put troops in, but we shouldn't do it before the conference starts.

55. The questions of beefing up training groups and increasing the MAAG and other United States forces were discussed. It was finally decided that Mr. Gilpatric will discuss this with State to see what troops would go into South Viet-Nam, and when. I asked to have a military man from the Joint Staff present. [4]

[Here follow two paragraphs on Thailand and space.]

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[1] Source: Naval Historical Center, Burke Papers: Top Secret, Hold Closely. Presumably drafted by Burke.

[2] The meeting took place at 10 a.m. (Johnson Library, Rusk Appointment Books)

[3] The 14-nation conference on Laos which opened May 15 at Geneva.

[4] Gilpatric met with Rusk and others on May 5 to discuss this question. According to the memorandum by the JCS representative, Rusk decided that combat forces should not be placed in South Vietnam at this time, but that the United States should augment the MAAG in small increments with up to 100 additional military personnel and not discuss this with the United Kingdom or the ICC. (Text in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pp. 67–68)

47. Telegram From the Chairman (Lemnitzer) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff [1]

Seoul, May 8, 1961—2:39 p.m.

UK 70272. Subject is Vietnam.

1. During my recent conference with the Country Team in Saigon and after hearing McGarr's report on last week's events in Washington with respect to Secretary Gilpatric's Task Force report, [2] I believe that we are facing a repetition of the unhappy sequence of events in Laos since 9 August 60 [3] which can only lead to the loss of Vietnam. While my information on events and conclusions in Washington may not be completely up-to-date, the situation in Vietnam, as I understand it, as about as follows:

a. One of the many urgent actions required to save Vietnam is the 20,000 increase in Vietnam's military strength which U.S. has generally approved. This additional strength is to be used to defeat the Viet Cong in Vietnam.

b. There are differing views within the Embassy as well as the U.S. Govt at the Washington level as to whether the U.S. or Vietnam will pay for this added authorized strength. The arguments, as I understand them, are that one segment of the U.S. Govt (and Embassy staff) considers that Vietnam has the necessary means to finance this additional effort and should do so. The Vietnamese Govt, on the other hand, considers that for a variety of reasons they are unable to do so.

c. For the foregoing reasons the result is an impasse with little or no real action taken to implement the increase in authorized strength. When I was in Saigon, only 4 to 6,000 of the increase had been raised and the entire effort was grinding to a dead halt with critical loss of time in initiating the long training period required.

2. I do not know all the political, economic and other non-military issues involved but I do have a fairly clear picture of how fundamental is the extremely serious enemy military threat in Vietnam today and the current ability of the Vietnamese Armed Forces to deal with it.

3. The problem of Vietnam, from the U.S. point of view, is very simple and very clear. I believe it can be stated in these words: Does the U.S. want Vietnam to follow the path of Laos (with all the effect that would have on the rest of SE Asia) or does the U.S. really want to maintain Vietnam as an independent non-Communist state closely

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[1] National Defense University, Lemnitzer Papers, 1-210-71. Top Secret; Priority. Repeated to CINCPAC for Felt. Also sent to McGarr as telegram K-244, May 8. Lemnitzer was in Seoul as part of his tour of East Asia; see Document 41.

[2] Document 42.

[3] On August 9, 1960, a revolt headed by neutralist Army Officer Kong Le overthrew the Laotian Government of Prince Tiao Somsanith.

aligned with the West? Stated another way, does the U.S. intend to take the necessary military action now to defeat the Viet Cong threat or do we intend to quibble for weeks and months over details of general policy, finances, Vietnamese Govt organization, etc., while Vietnam slowly but surely goes down the drain of Communism as North Vietnam and a large portion of Laos have gone to date?

4. I have been informed by McGarr that as a direct result of my strong recommendations to President Diem in Ambassador Harriman's presence, the President has now issued edicts designating a field command as the directional headquarters in conducting the fight against the Viet Cong and establishing a central intelligence agency. Both actions were felt by Ambassador Durbrow to be key actions in the counterinsurgency plan and indicates that President Diem recognizes the urgent requirement for drastic action to meet the threat and has taken actions that were not easy for him to take in that coup-prone country.[4]

5. If I correctly understood the expressed views of top government officials before I left Washington, I gathered that we do intend to take whatever action is required to save Vietnam. Yet weeks have passed by without any indication of positive action. Here is a nation, an important nation in SE Asia, that desperately needs more military help. Notwithstanding the importance and urgency of the situation:

a. The U.S. Embassy in Saigon opposes any increases in MAAG strength which is needed to meet the increased military requirements.

b. We are operating on programs under MAP which were designed to provide mere status quo maintenance of existing forces under normal conditions. This notwithstanding the fact that Vietnam is facing an internal security situation that threatens its very existence.

c. We are arguing, and wasting time by so doing, as to who, if anyone, will support the cost of the relatively modest increase of a 20,000 man strength in the Vietnamese Armed Forces to deal with the dangerous internal security threat. Each day lost can never be regained.

6. In view of the very real enemy threat in Vietnam and the fact that in the eyes of the world, and particularly in the Far East, the international prestige of the U.S. is literally at stake, I feel that we must avoid the marginal and piecemeal efforts that too often have typified the past and build into our program sufficient support in

[4] McGarr commented on May 7 that both these edicts were signed on May 5 immediately after Durbrow's departure as a sign of Vietnamese displeasure at the Ambassador's tactics of pressing for political reform at the expense of military necessities. (S–157 from Saigon, National Defense University, Lemnitzer Papers, Folder 19)

men, material and money to definitely assure that we do not lose Vietnam.

7. Request copies of this message be passed to Secretary McNamara, Secretary Gilpatric, General Wheeler and General Bonesteel for their information.

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48. Editorial Note

Under date of May 8, President Kennedy addressed a 4-page letter to President Diem proposing a collaborative effort in "a series of joint, mutually supporting actions in the military, political, economic and other fields" in the struggle against Communist aggression. (Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series) The text is printed in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pages 132–135.

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49. Letter From the Deputy Assistant Director, Far East, of the United States Information Agency (Nickel) to the Public Affairs Officer at the Embassy in Vietnam (Anspacher) [1]

Washington, May 9, 1961.

DEAR JOHN: We are in the process of cranking up a major propaganda campaign on Viet Cong insurgency in Viet-Nam. Our instructions are to start this immediately and continue it at the highest possible level until further notice.

One of our big problems is scarcity of unclassified material upon which to draw for specifics of Viet Cong insurgency and terrorism. All steps are being taken here to get as much past material declassified as possible. But the real crux of the problem lies in Saigon, i.e., classification at the source. The CAS station chief, Mr. Colby, is on his way back to Saigon. He has been briefed here on

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 335, Program Direction. Secret; Official–Informal; For Addressee Only.

the necessity of minimum classification so as much material as possible can be put into public channels world wide.

I wish you would make it a point to see Colby as soon after his arrival as possible, discuss this whole problem with him and work closely with him on developing a flow of material. It can move in any form that seems advisable, despatch, telegram, or signals, but it should move through our channels to give our media operators ready access to it at this end.

Please keep me fully informed on your arrangements with Colby and the prognosis for instituting the flow. We are going to have to depend primarily on you and sources there to keep this campaign going at the necessary level.

Best personal regards.

Sincerely,

EJN

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50. Telegram From the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (McGarr) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Felt) [1]

Saigon, May 10, 1961—7:30 p.m.

MAGCH-SA 685. References: a. JCS 995295; [2] b. CINCPAC 051737Z; [3] c. MAGCH-LO 670, DTG 061049Z [4]

1. Recent trip to Washington discussed with General Barnes in Hawaii and discussions here with General Lemnitzer reported to you in my ref c, emphasize strong determination on part US Government to stop present deterioration US prestige in world's eyes brought about by Cuba and Laos setbacks. Both President Kennedy and General Lemnitzer have repeatedly stated Vietnam is not to go behind Bamboo Curtain under any circumstances, and we must do all that is necessary to prevent this from happening. They both state this is primarily military problem and in seeking a solution we must

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 68 A 5159, SGN(61)19-GVN Top Secret.

[2] Not found.

[3] This telegram discussed various aspects of the staffing and training of the MAAG in Vietnam. (Washington National Records Center, RG 319, HQDA Message Center, Reel 10248)

[4] Document 41.

not be overly restricted by such considerations as limitations imposed by Geneva accords, budgetary strictures, or necessity for detailed time consuming justification requirements and programming in classic MAP pattern. Moreover General Lemnitzer stressed importance of including sufficient means to get the job done. MAAG has been operating on a short leash for some time; and in view of the current real concern of the Vietnamese over the serious situation in SEA, a firm and determined move is essential not only to cope with the demands of the present situation but to shore-up the morale of the Vietnamese. Nevertheless, in spite urgency every attempt being made to evaluate situation and develop requirements on objective basis.

2. With this in mind two separate but related studies are under way here. One study being made to determine required RVNAF force structure assuming Laos goes Communist or Communist inclined. The second study which bears directly on refs a and b is to determine what MAAG augmentation necessary to increase effectiveness of MAAG effort and insure effective implementation those military courses of action approved by President. This message relates only to second study. Assumptions on which this latter study based as follows:

a. MAAG to intensify and broaden advisory and training effort.
b. GVN will accept expanded concept MAAG effort and cooperate accordingly.
c. US and GVN will no longer be bound by limitations in Geneva Accords on introduction of military personnel and war material.
d. MAAG effort to be reinforced by attachment US military support units as required.

3. The first step necessary to improve the effectiveness of the MAAG effort is to remove at once the self imposed 685 ceiling this MAAG. The next requirement as envisioned in the Gilpatric Task Force study[3] and in ref a is immediate authority to requisition personnel against the Joint Table of Distribution sent to your Hq for approval 3 May 61;[4] expedited action on all personnel requisitions is essential.

4. The study on MAAG augmentation referred to in para 2 indicates a requirement for MAAG strength increase as follows: immediate increase of 156 with a further increase of 272 phased over a 3 month period. Subsequent additional personnel requirements are envisioned but not prepared at this time to submit specific needs.

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[3] Document 42.
[4] Not found.

[Here follow paragraphs 5–9 which discussed the officers and cadre needed, the hardware essential to the increase, and the costs involved.]

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51. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President [1]

Washington, May 10, 1961.

SUBJECT

Viet-Nam NSC Paper [2]

You should be aware of the following factors bearing on the Viet-Nam paper.

1. Although we have no alternative except to support Diem now, he may be overthrown, as the accompanying cables suggest. [3] If so, we should be prepared to move fast with the younger army types who may then emerge. Such a crisis is not to be sought, among other reasons because its outcome could not be predicted; but should it happen, we may be able to get more nearly the kind of military organization and perhaps, even, the domestic political program we want in Viet-Nam but have been unable to get from Diem.

2. For the time being our Ambassador must make a college try at reconciling Diem and his army, giving the army more scope to organize the battle systematically.

3. The paper urges (page 9) a series of domestic, political and economic moves in Viet-Nam. It should be understood clearly that these are measures which we have pressed for a long time on Diem, without notable success; and that we have still to find the technique for bringing our great bargaining power to bear on leaders of client states to do things they ought to do but don't want to do. In short, this crucial problem is not and cannot be solved in a staff paper. It is

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series Secret. No drafting or clearance information is given on the source text.

[2] Reference is to a May 6 draft of "A Program of Action To Prevent Communist Domination of South Vietnam" (see Document 42) by the Task Force for South Vietnam. For text, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pp. 70–130 (with annexes and under cover of a memorandum from Lansdale, May 8) and pp. 130–134 (without annexes), and *Declassified Documents, 1977*, p. 185B (with annexes).

[3] No telegrams were attached to the source text.

a question of diplomatic technique we shall have to learn and apply in Taiwan, Iran and Korea as well as Viet-Nam.

4. We still have to think through the political, diplomatic, and other conditions under which it would be wise for us to put American troops into Viet-Nam (pp. 6–7).

5. We still have to think through the question of when it would be wise to raise the matter of Viet-Nam in the UN (p. 10); and how such a move might relate to the conference on Laos or the putting of U.S. troops into Viet-Nam.

6. Further thought is also required on the question of precisely how we handle the question of the Geneva Accords in relation to Viet-Nam (pp. 11–12).

7. Except for these unresolved matters, the action program suggested seems, for the present, a useful way to proceed.

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52. National Security Action Memorandum No. 52 [1]

Washington, May 11, 1961.

TO

The Secretary of State

The President today reviewed the report of the Vietnam Task Force, entitled "Program of Action to Prevent Communist Domination of South Vietnam." [2] Subject to amendments or revisions which he may wish to make after providing opportunity for a further discussion at the next meeting of the National Security Council, now scheduled for May 19, [3] the President has made the following decisions on the basis of this report:

1. The U.S. objective and concept of operations stated in the report are approved: to prevent Communist domination of South Vietnam; to create in that country a viable and increasingly democratic society, and to initiate, on an accelerated basis, a series of

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[1] Source: Department of State, S/S–NSC Files: Lot 70 D 264, NSAM Follow-up Reports. Top Secret. Information copies were also sent to the Departments of Defense and the Treasury, CIA, USIA, ICA, and the Bureau of the Budget. Also printed in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pp. 136–137.

[2] See footnote 2, *supra*, and Document 42.

[3] At its meeting on May 19, the National Security Council noted that National Security Action Memorandum No. 52 required no revision. (NSC Action No. 2428, Department of State, S/S–NSC Files: Lot 66 D 95)

mutually supporting actions of a military, political, economic, psychological and covert character designed to achieve this objective.

2. The approval given for specific military actions by the President at the National Security Council meeting on April 29, 1961,[4] is confirmed.

3. Additional actions listed at pages 4 and 5 of the Task Force Report are authorized, with the objective of meeting the increased security threat resulting from the new situation along the frontier between Laos and Vietnam. In particular, the President directs an assessment of the military utility of a further increase in GVN forces from 170,000 to 200,000, together with an assessment of the parallel political and fiscal implications.

4. The President directs full examination by the Defense Department, under the guidance of the Director of the continuing Task Force on Vietnam, of the size and composition of forces which would be desirable in the case of a possible commitment of U.S. forces to Vietnam. The diplomatic setting within which this action might be taken should also be examined.

5. The U.S. will seek to increase the confidence of President Diem and his government in the United States by a series of actions and messages relating to the trip of Vice President Johnson. The U.S. will attempt to strengthen President Diem's popular support within Vietnam by reappraisal and negotiation, under the direction of Ambassador Nolting. Ambassador Nolting is also requested to recommend any necessary reorganization of the Country Team for these purposes.

6. The U.S. will negotiate in appropriate ways to improve Vietnam's relationship with other countries, especially Cambodia, and its standing in world opinion.

7. The Ambassador is authorized to begin negotiations looking toward a new bilateral arrangement with Vietnam, but no firm commitment will be made to such an arrangement without further review by the President.

8. The U.S. will undertake economic programs in Vietnam with a view to both short term immediate impact and a contribution to the longer range economic viability of the country, and the specific actions proposed on pages 12 and 13 of the Task Force Report are authorized.

9. The U.S. will strengthen its efforts in the psychological field as recommended on pages 14 and 15 of the Task Force Report.

10. The program for covert actions outlined on page 15 of the Task Force Report is approved.

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[4] See Document 40

11. These directions will be supported by appropriate budgetary action, but the President reserves judgment on the levels of funding proposed on pages 15 and 16 of the Task Force Report and in the funding annex.

12. Finally, the President approves the continuation of a special Task Force on Vietnam, established in and directed by the Department of State under Sterling J. Cottrell as Director, and Chalmers B. Wood as Executive Officer.

McGeorge Bundy

IV. VICE PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S TRIP TO ASIA, MAY 9–24 AND THE VISIT OF VIETNAMESE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY THUAN TO WASHINGTON, JUNE 12–17

53. Editorial Note

Following Rostow's memorandum to the President, April 12 (Document 27), planning began on the schedule for Vice President Johnson's trip to Asia. Initially, the Embassy in Saigon wanted him to arrive in Vietnam in time for Diem's inauguration on April 29, but this was not feasible. By early May, plans for the trip included visits to Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, India, and Pakistan, beginning May 9 and ending May 24. On May 5, President Kennedy announced at his press conference that he had asked the Vice President to undertake a special fact-finding mission to Asia. For text of the announcement and related questions and answers, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1961*, pages 354–362.

The Vice President, accompanied by Mrs. Johnson and President Kennedy's sister and brother-in-law, Jean and Stephen Smith, arrived in Saigon at 6:40 p.m. on May 11 and proceeded directly to the Gia Long Palace, the official government guest house. That evening the Vice President attended a dinner hosted by Ambassador Nolting, who had presented his credentials the previous day. On May 12, he held extensive conversations with President Diem starting at 8 a.m. followed by a day of ceremonial visits which ended with a dinner in his honor hosted by Diem. On May 13, the Vice President paid a brief farewell call on Diem at 8 a.m. before departing for Manila at 9. The documentation that follows presents the most significant aspects of his visit to Saigon. For a report to President Kennedy on the whole trip, see Document 60. Documentation on the planning for the trip, including briefing papers, schedules, records of conversations, and biographic materials is in Department of State, Conference Files. Lot 65 D 366, CFs 1875–1883, *ibid.*, Central File 033.1100–JO/; and the Johnson Library.

54. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, May 13, 1961—7 p.m.

1740. Codel Johnson. Vice President's initial call on President Diem morning May 12. [2]

(This not cleared by Vice President.)

After opening visit with presentation to Diem of gift of *American Heritage* books, Vice President immediately moved into substantive purpose of visit. He told Diem his visit to Vietnam is expression of President Kennedy's letter to President Diem (Department's 1359 [3]). Vice President noted letter represents President's thoughts on what might be done about situation in Vietnam and offers basis for what US role might be in cooperation with GVN. Vice President stressed that we could learn much from Diem's experience and he had come to listen to his views as well as present President Kennedy's.

Diem read letter and then proceeded outline situation in Vietnam both historic and present. He brought in particularly aspects of situation suggested by President Kennedy's letter and noted that he had proposed 20,000 force increase and MAP support for full Civil Guard several years ago.

Vice President succeeded in getting Diem's attention refocused on President Kennedy's letter and asked Diem specifically whether he agreed to various proposals in letter. Following is Diem's reaction point-by-point:

1. Agreed infuse into our actions high sense of urgency and dedication.

2. Pleased US has approved MAP support for 20,000 force increase but pointed to problem of paying local currency costs for this increase.

3. Agreed parallel political and economic action of equal importance with military measures but stated political and economic

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/5-1361. Secret; Priority. According to another copy, this telegram was drafted by Mendenhall and cleared with Nolting. (Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878, 361.1) Also sent to CINCPAC for PolAd and repeated to Manila, Taipei, and Phnom Penh.

[2] The meeting began at 8 a.m. with Mendenhall, who characterized it as cordial, interpreting. (Department of State, Office of the Historian, Vietnam Interviews, December 27, 1983) A nine-point check list of things for the Vice President to do at the meeting is in Johnson Library, VP Security Files, Program for South Vietnam. In telegram 1724, May 12, dispatched immediately after this meeting, the Embassy in Saigon commented that the visit had already done a great deal to establish the basis for increased and successful joint efforts to be undertaken in mutual confidence. (Department of State, Central Files, 033.1100-JO/5-1261)

[3] Telegram 1359, May 9, *ibid.*, 751K.11/5-961, transmitted the text of the letter to Diem; see Document 48.

actions must be those appropriate to Vietnam as country which is underdeveloped and subject Communist subversion.

4. Agreed to increase in MAAG personnel.

5. Agreed MAAG support and advise self-defense corps.

6. Pleased MAP support for entire Civil Guard force of 68,000.

7. Likewise accepted offer material support for junk force.

8. Noted we prepared consider case for further increase in strength armed forces.

9. Agreed further urgent joint study on border control techniques.

10. Agreed consider establishment in SEA of research and development facility.

11. Agreed use military specialists to assist Vietnamese armed forces in health, welfare, and public works activities at village level. Stressed, however, importance of tact of foreign officials in working in this field.

12. Agreed renew border control negotiations with Cambodian Government. (However reference to previous efforts by GVN to obtain Cambodian agreement on joint border action and to Cambodian "aggressiveness in seizing at least six Vietnamese Islands" indicate continued GVN tendency place onus on Cambodian Government for lack results in border control field, without displaying awareness that GVN has taken no initiative in other fields such as settlement its financial debt to Cambodia which might put Cambodians in better frame of mind for negotiations.)

13. Agreed on desirability of using foreign non-American experts in counter-guerrilla field but stressed it would be up to initiative GVN to request these experts and they would have to work under its control.

14. Agreed to proposal for despatch US economic and fiscal experts to work out financial plan as basis for joint efforts. Demurred at first, however, about accepting experts from US Government on grounds they would lack impartiality and objectivity but Vice President pointed out would be necessary from our point of view to use US employed experts if we were to come up with plan which would be basis for official US action.

15. Agreed we should work together on longer range economic development program.

Vice President urged Diem to provide letter of reply to President Kennedy as early as possible. Diem said he would do so prior to Vice President's return to Washington from trip.

Diem presented memo to Vice President on need for additional defense support aid.[4] Memorandum points to increasing local currency costs especially in defense field and states increased aid needed in order close balance payments gap and maintain foreign exchange reserves at minimum level $200 million. Requests increase of about $30 million "above 1961 average level" (i.e., presumably for FY 1962). Also recommends that Buy American policy should not be

[4] Transmitted as an enclosure to despatch 519 from Saigon, May 16. (Department of State, Central Files, 033.1100-JO/5-1661)

applied to aid program for Viet-Nam. Text memorandum being pouched.

Agreed at end conversation joint communiqué should be issued.[5]

Comment: While history negotiations with GVN shows frequent slippage on GVN side in maintaining relative schedule (e.g., in presenting counter-insurgency plan in February we proposed agreement on plan be reached within two weeks but took two and one-half months), we believe Diem will reply President Kennedy letter shortly. Meanwhile, joint communiqué today buttons up certain matters. Suggest immediate recruitment economic and financial experts (group should be small and good and headed by top-level, well-known figure) and team military specialists in civic action field, but neither body should be despatched Viet-Nam prior receipt written reply President Kennedy's letter. Believe it would be useful have GVN memo on need for increased defense support aid (transmitted separately) examined by economic and financial group.[6]

Nolting

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[5] The Embassy in Saigon transmitted the draft of a communique in telegram 1731, May 12 (*Ibid.* 611.51K/5-1261) The draft had 13 agreed points, but the final communique had only 8 For its text, see *American Foreign Policy Current Documents, 1961*, pp 1043–1045 Since telegram 1731 asked Washington to be ready to comment by telephone early Friday, May 13, presumably the changes were made at that time

[6] An Embassy report on Johnson's talk with Diem after dinner on May 12 was transmitted in telegram 1743 from Saigon, May 15 (Department of State, Central Files, 033 1100-JO/5–1561, see also *Declassified Documents, 1981* p 537) During this conversation, Diem said that he desired U S and/or SEATO combat troops in Vietnam only in case of overt aggression

55. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, May 15, 1961—2 p.m.

1744. Codel Johnson. VP's final call on President Diem morning May 13. [2]

(This not cleared by VP)

VP emphasized to President Diem that he was very impressed with his visit to Viet-Nam and warmth of his reception here. He told President Diem he could feel sure that VP would be strong supporter of Viet-Nam in Washington. He outlined steps which he suggested President Diem take in near future:

1. Issuance of joint communiqué at conclusion of VP's visit. [3]

2. Quick brief letter replying to President Kennedy's letter to President Diem. This would be more a letter of acknowledgement than a substantive letter. [4]

3. Follow-up letter from President Diem to President Kennedy timed to arrive in Washington with VP Johnson's return from trip abroad. This would be substantive letter and VP suggested Diem put into this letter his views on additional assistance which he feels Viet-Nam will really need to stem Communist tide in this country. He suggested letter might include reference to possible one hundred thousand increase in armed forces (over 20 thousand increase already agreed to) and measures of economic and social aid. VP advised Diem to work out cost estimate carefully with US officials in Saigon to insure they would be properly supported in Washington.

Nolting

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 033.1100-JO/5-1561. Secret; Priority. According to another copy, this telegram was drafted by Mendenhall and cleared by Nolting. (Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878, 361.1) Repeated to Hong Kong, Bangkok, and CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] The meeting took place at 7:30 and lasted for 20 minutes. Another record of the conversation states that the Vice President appeared tired and distracted. (Memorandum of conversation, May 13, *ibid.*, 350 GVN)

[3] For text of the final communique, see *American Foreign Policy, Current Documents, 1961*, pp. 1043–1045.

[4] The text of Diem's reply, May 15, is in *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pp. 155–156.

56. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, May 20, 1961—7:41 p.m.

1423. Task Force VN. Following is the Presidential Program for Vietnam to be carried out on priority action basis with high sense urgency and dedication. Each action listed herein has been approved by the President.

Objective

To prevent Communist domination of Viet-Nam by initiating, on an accelerated basis, a series of mutually supporting actions of a political, military, economic, psychological, and covert character, designed to create in that country a viable and increasingly democratic society and to keep Viet-Nam free.

Program

Political.

1. Seek to increase the confidence of President Diem and his Government in the United States by a series of actions and messages relating to the trip of Vice President Johnson.

2. Attempt to strengthen President Diem's popular support within Viet-Nam by reappraisal and negotiation, under the direction of Ambassador Nolting.

3. Begin negotiations looking toward a new bilateral arrangement with Viet-Nam, but make no firm commitment to such an arrangement without further review by the President.

4. Negotiate in appropriate ways to improve Viet-Nam's relationship with other countries, especially Cambodia, and its standing in world opinion.

5. Strengthen border-control arrangements, particularly with Cambodia; encourage Diem to authorize the renewal of negotiations on this subject with the Cambodian Government. If he concurs, we

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/5-2061. Top Secret; Priority. Drafted and signed for the Acting Secretary by Cottrell and cleared with McConaughy and S/S. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd. Also printed in *Declassified Documents, 1978*, p. 112A. Telegram 1422, May 20, advised that the Presidential Program transmitted here listed only those items specifically approved by the President, most of which were extracted from the Task Force Report (see footnote 2, Document 51, and Document 42). It also advised the Embassy in Saigon that Task Force traffic should be slugged Task Force VN with the appropriate paragraph number corresponding to the Presidential Program. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/5-2061)

will use our best efforts with the Cambodians to facilitate these discussions.

6. Cooperate with the GVN in planning the most effective use of assistance offered by other governments to assist Viet-Nam in its actions against the Viet Cong, including the provision of certain expert personnel with long experience, e.g., in Malaya.

7. Examine the diplomatic setting within which a possible commitment of U.S. forces to Viet-Nam might be undertaken.

8. Assess the political implications of increasing GVN forces from 170,000 to 200,000.

9. Ambassador Nolting is requested to recommend any necessary reorganization of the Country Team to accomplish 1 and 2 above.

Military:

10. Install as a matter of priority a radar surveillance capability which will enable the GVN to obtain warning of Communist overflights being conducted for intelligence or clandestine air supply purposes.

11. Military Assistance Program support of 20,000-man increase in ARVN is approved.

12. Increase the MAAG as necessary to insure the effective implementation of the military portion of the program including the training of the additional 20,000 men.

13. Consider together with the GVN, if developments should warrant, the case for a further increase in ARVN strength beyond the 170,000 limit now contemplated.

14. Provide MAP support for the entire Civil Guard force of 68,000.

15. Expand MAAG responsibilities to include authority to provide support and advice to the Self Defense Corps with a strength of approximately 40,000.

16. Provide MAP support for the Vietnamese Junk Force as a means of preventing Viet Cong clandestine supply and infiltration into Viet-Nam by water, to include training of junk crews in Viet-Nam or at U.S. bases.

17. Give Special Forces training to assist the GVN in accelerating the training of its Special Forces.

18. Collaborate with the GVN in the use of certain military specialists to assist and work with the ARVN in health, welfare, and public works activities in the villages.

19. Study jointly with the GVN the problem of Viet-Nam's borders to develop techniques whereby crossing of those borders by unfriendly elements can be more effectively controlled.

20. Consider jointly the establishment in Southeast Asia of a facility to develop and test, using the tools of modern technology, new techniques to help the U.S. and GVN in their joint campaign against the Communists.[2]

Economic:

21. Despatch to Viet-Nam a group of highly qualified economic and fiscal experts who would meet with GVN experts and work out a financial plan on which joint U.S.–GVN efforts can be based.

22. ICA is authorized to move into a rural development-civic action program, to include short-range, simple, impact projects which would be undertaken by teams working in cooperation with local communities.

23. Undertake the development of a long-range economic development program as a means of demonstrating U.S. confidence in the economic and political future of the country by authorizing Ambassador Nolting to inform the GVN that the U.S. is prepared to discuss a long-range joint five-year development program which would involve contributions and undertakings by both parties.

24. Assess the fiscal and other economic implications of a further ARVN forces increase from 170,000 to 200,000.

Psychological:

25. Assist the GVN to accelerate its public information program to help develop a broad public understanding of the actions required to combat the Communist insurgents and to build public confidence in the GVN's determination and ability to deal with the Communist threat.

26. The U.S. Country Team, in coordination with the GVN Ministry of Defense, should compile and declassify for use of media representatives in Viet-Nam and throughout the world documented facts concerning Communist infiltration and terrorist activities and the measures being taken by the GVN to counter such attacks.

27. In coordination with CIA and the appropriate GVN Ministry, USIS will increase the flow of information about unfavorable conditions in North Viet-Nam to media representatives.

28. Develop agricultural pilot-projects throughout the country, with a view toward exploiting their beneficial psychological effects.

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[2] On May 23, the Department of State transmitted the following text of a new paragraph 21 for insertion in the Presidential Program and requested that subsequent paragraphs be renumbered accordingly:

"21. A full examination will be made of the size and composition of forces which would be desirable in the case of possible commitment of U.S. forces to Viet-nam." (Telegram 1432 to Saigon, *ibid.* 751K.00/5-2361)

29. Exploit as part of a planned psychological campaign the rehabilitation of Communist Viet Cong prisoners, stressing the errors of Communism, and broadcast this material to Communist-held areas, including North Viet-Nam, to induce defections.

30. Provide adequate funds for an impressive U.S. participation in the Saigon Trade Fair of 1962.

Covert.

31. Program to be carried forward and coordinated at appropriate levels.

Fiscal.

32. The President reserves judgement on the levels of funding proposed in the Task Force Report and in the funding annex.

Bowles

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57. Telegram From the Embassy in Thailand to the Department of State [1]

Bangkok, May 20, 1961—9 p.m.

2101. Codel Johnson. From Ambassador Young. I believe the Vice President's timely and gallant enterprise of purpose accomplished the missions originally conceived in Washington. He reached the politicos, the administrators, and the people. Saigon, Manila, Taipei, and Bangkok will never be quite the same again, for a new chapter has opened in US relations with Southeast Asia. The friendliness and sincerity of the Vice President and Mrs. Johnson were felt and returned. They came, saw, and won over. We must now work to sustain this wave of good feeling and not let it recede.

A sound personal relationship has begun with Diem, Chiang and Sarit. The words of assurance and earnestness of discussion established that personal bond between men of power and authority so essential for effective dealing with Asian leaders. As earnest of cooperation Sarit has agreed to increase Thai Defense budget by ten percent of our contribution, which Embassy considers symbolically

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 033.1100-JO/5-2061. Secret; Priority. Repeated to Athens. Young accompanied the Vice President on his visit to Saigon, Manila, Taipei, and Bangkok.

significant. Meanwhile Diem issued his own communiqué and directed quick preparation of positive reply to President Kennedy's letter,[2] which is promising. I feel greatly heartened that we have at last opened a two-way channel of confidence at the highest level with these three men. Later might have been too late.

The "veep to the people program" also went over, notwithstanding the reserve and scepticism of the orthodox and the old timers Asians and Americans. What impressed me in all four capitals was the eagerness of the younger generation, particularly the school children to reach him. This was especially significant in Bangkok. Young people gathered everywhere to greet an American leader and spokesman for the President whose name was often sounded by voices among the crowds. The leaders of tomorrow and the people of the future were with the Vice President. He reached them in a new kind of dialogue despite the reserve of the receding generation. The Vice President dramatically carried the pedestal of power to the open places of the people far better than could long lectures or diplomatic notes. Witnessing an American Vice President mixing with the crowds and talking with them may serve to humanize political communications in Asia. It may jostle political leaders and their administrators out of their office sanctuaries, even if they are nettled by this typically American approach. Some officials felt challenged to go and do likewise, others betrayed their uneasiness over this intrusion into their supposedly well ordered and old-fashioned system of aristocratic aloofness.

This enterprise also succeeded psychologically. It boosted the badly-sagging morale of Asians and Americans out here. He pictured the new administration for Southeast Asians. It filled the newspapers and TV of America with Southeast Asia. Where our image has been blurred, the mission sharpened the focus. Where our dialogue had been garbled, the mission has corrected the pitch and spoken clearly as well as eloquently. However, we must not now just bask in the afterglow. The words of assurance must be followed by acts of support. Shrewd, tough leaders like Diem, Chiang, and particularly Sarit, are waiting to see if the US follows through quickly and vigorously with concrete actions. Owing to his deep concern over Laos and the vulnerability of his long frontier, Prime Minister Sarit is waiting to see what material steps we now take in Southeast Asia. Neither he nor Thai public opinion were pleased that the US could give no specific assurances on Laos. The visit exposed but could not fill our gaping silence on Laos for understandable reasons. If the visits to Bangkok and Saigon do not result in more real support, we will look terrible in Southeast Asia. Neutralism will spread, Geneva

[2] See footnote 4, Document 55.

might then turn into a communist victory celebration. The follow-up of this visit is the heart of the matter now. Sarit, for example, wants some material benefit from the United States alliance to show his officers and people. In Vietnam will the government with our massive support take steps to ensure a political acceptability? In Thailand can we stimulate a political motivation among the armed forces and rural people to support a defense plan to secure the Mekong Valley?

A significant outcome of this enterprise was the parallelism of views expressed by the four leaders we met, particularly Diem, Chiang and Sarit.

A) They felt Laos is most discouraging but still not lost. They are really apprehensive over US policies and the uncertainty and inaccuracy in their view of US attitudes on Laos. They say the Lao can and will fight if adequately trained and equipped, which they never have been. It is a mistake to write Laos off despite difficulties in dealing there. Diem, Chiang and Sarit stressed the urgency of maximum training for the FAL while there is a cease-fire to anticipate any breakdown of the Geneva Conference or any renewal of hostilities.

B) For the time being these three leaders are allergic to putting US soldiers into the area. Diem showed no appetite for American combat troops mixing among the Vietnamese people. He told me privately that we should be extremely careful about such a proposal, and pleaded with me that American military personnel—and all Americans—exercise tact and restraint in Vietnam in this critical and delicate period. Sarit also quickly backed away from taking up any suggestion of putting US troops in Thailand either under SEATO or otherwise. He was not so reluctant over Laos where, if hostilities are resumed, he will wish to lend military support to RLG but only in company with US. I think we must be aware that this a sensitive internal issue for these leaders while there is no major provocation such as the outbreak of large scale hostilities or infiltration. What they want is adequate equipment and training rapidly and efficiently provided to assure them success in their military missions.

C) These leaders responded genuinely to the Vice President's emphasis on economic progress and social justice to give the people a stake in the present and hope for the future. These famous figures even began to talk like "new frontiermen."

Complimented by the Vice President's notice of their social and economic efforts, they seemed to accept the philosophy that a politico-social program is the soundest way to increase their popularity and protect their country, provided they have the military capability to deal with communist guerillas or divisions. The Vice President's private discussions, public speeches, and communiques highlighted the administration's emphasis on social justice. Southeast Asia needs this emphasis from Washington. The leaders and the people will now expect us to continue this dialogue on a two-way channel at all levels.

D) Each in his own version implied a need for a new political departure of some kind in East Asia. While nebulous, their individu-

al ideas seemed to spring from their disregard and even hostility for the French and British. While Chiang was most specific, his other Asian colleagues also wanted unhindered American leadership in Asia. Chiang proposed some new organization. Sarit thought this was a good idea. Diem, at least in my private discussions, again treated Southeast Asia as a whole and not piecemeal.

In conclusion, the next step is to capitalize the assets of this visit and disregard some of the minor liabilities or irritants that inevitably follow in the wake of such an ambitious enterprise: 1) First we must go all out to stamp out the Viet Cong in the Delta area of Vietnam. To implement a comprehensive politico-military program the President and his brother promised me that they would reply positively and in detail to President Kennedy's letter as the Vice President suggested. I urged Secretary Thuan carry the letter to Washington, but I would not be surprised if he were kept in Saigon where he is so needed. 2) We must draft a supplemental military program for Thailand and reverse the cutback for FY 1962 USOM program which seems to contradict reality out here (a really good team of experts should be sent to help on fiscal planning and economic development). 3) We need to clarify our contingency thinking on Laos for the benefit of Diem and Sarit. 4) We must use the opportunities the visit gave us to mount military, economic, social, and psychological reinforcement of Thailand, Vietnam and as much of Laos as possible to strengthen our hand at Geneva. 5) In order to retain the value of this trip I would urge USIS to compile a booklet of the speeches, communiqués, pictures and schedules of this visit for circulation in this area to play up its progressive gains.

This enterprising visit did not help our adversaries. It will hurt them in this area if we follow through quickly. We should be ready for their counter actions at least in propaganda and political action somewhere.

So, trip's results are summed up in comment volunteered by Bangkok taxi driver—"Your Vice President he good man. He talk people."

Young

58. Telegram From the Embassy in Thailand to the Department of State [1]

Bangkok, May 22, 1961—10 p.m.

2111. SEATO. Since my accreditation as US Council Rep accomplished, I chaired May 22 restricted session. At opening of session, New Zealand Rep welcomed me on behalf other council reps and Sec-Gen. Pakistan Rep then suggested that since Vice Pres Johnson's time had not permitted him report Saigon visit, I might give council reps outline of visit and talks with Diem.

Drawing on substance Pres Kennedy's letter to Diem and joint communiqué, I reported that Vice Pres had consulted with Diem on two major problems: (1) military pacification and (2) social-economic development. US position is insurgency must be eliminated. Pres Kennedy suggested following as principal means accomplishing this: (1) Immediate increase GVN armed forces by 20,000, with US and GVN to keep under review possible further expansion. Increase to consist mainly ground forces supplied by US. (2) Development new style civil guard stationed in and around villages to replace old civil guard who not properly trained, armed or organized. Estimated figure in neighborhood fifty to sixty thousand. (3) Assistance to GVN in developing larger, more efficient coastal patrol force with motorized junks and other small craft. (4) Sending of military research and development specialists to South Vietnam. Would explore all possibilities of developing new types equipment and weapons required for mobile warfare in Vietnam terrain. Expected to include work in electronics for ground and air surveillance of frontiers. I stressed point that old methods of defense by no means being abandoned but that we mean to supplement them with new developments particularly suitable to situation this part of world. If worthwhile developments result from R & D efforts Vietnam, they might well be applied to other countries of SEA. US is convinced prevention infiltration a most difficult task but is determined do everything possible to limit infiltration. Idea is to be sure we are trying every means to play game better than Communists. I reported that Pres Diem most receptive to U.S. proposals and arrangements now under way for early implementation.

I said Vice Pres and Diem also considered need for technical assistance, not only by US but by other UN members and interested countries, particularly assistance in rehabilitation of villages subject

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 379/5-2261. Secret. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd, Saigon, Wellington, Karachi, Canberra, Manila, Vientiane, London, Paris, and Geneva.

to attack or duress from Viet Cong. I emphasized that this would be a major undertaking and that Vietnam would need extensive help from outside. I urged other SEATO govts, particularly those with experience in this or related fields, to lend assistance. I noted that general discussion also held on long-term economic and social assistance and that plans under way for establishing joint cost-sharing arrangement. I noted that long-term development concept consistent with Kennedy administration emphasis on long-range rather than "crash" projects. I informed colleagues we had appointed a task force to work with GVN; that in US view welfare of Vietnamese populace and their attitude toward GVN is key factor. We recognize this is matter of extreme delicacy and this was one reason Vice Pres Johnson personally given responsibility for approaching Diem.

I then emphasized that US horizons by no means limited to Vietnam and that Pres has placed very high priority on all SEA. He wishes be sure our commitments to Asian friends well understood not only by Asian govts and peoples but also by other side. Our present goal is stabilization of Laos and, in addition, prevention festering sore of communism spreading into neighboring countries. We have no illusions task will be easy but job is under way and we intend see it through. In answer Philippine question on morale GVN forces compared with FAL, I noted morale high and they willing to fight despite weariness of long campaign against Viet Cong. I cited new ranger units as particularly effective, not only as fighters and village watchdogs but because of their humane treatment of villagers which earning them real popularity and bringing people closer to Govt. French and Australian Reps commented that GVN troops have no misgivings about nature and intention Viet Cong, having confessed atrocities perpetuated such as wholesale assassinations, burning of schools and terrorizing children and teachers.

Turning momentarily to North Vietnam, French Rep said French official from Hanoi now visiting Bangkok reports severe famine in North Vietnam. Rice ration totals 9 kilos per month and only 500 grams meat when available. New ration cards required every fortnight, people fainting on streets, and police control tightening. In this official's view, famine is one major motivating factor behind Viet Cong guerrilla activities in South Vietnam. French Rep will have further consultations and expects receive extensive report which he hopes make available other council reps next mtg.

All council reps expressed deep interest in US plans for South Vietnam as I had outlined. Australian Rep particularly interested in new developmental plans but said he also pleased US not neglecting older method which possibly not fully exploited in past. Stopping terrorism and reinforcing rural populace is at heart of Vietnam problem he felt sure Australia would wish join US in program for

South Vietnam and believes Australian experiences New Guinea and Malaya might be helpful. Philippine Rep believes his govt could provide expert advice and assistance in view its experience with Huk problem. He also suggested operation brotherhood medical activities might be extended to Vietnam. New Zealand Rep similarly expressed interest and felt his govt might take part.

[Here follow three paragraphs on Laos.]

Young

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59. Paper Prepared by the Vice President[1]

Washington, undated

[Here follow sections A–C, the Laotian crisis and Southeast Asia, Taiwan, and the Philippines.]

D. Viet Nam

Among the countries which I visited, the threat to peace and progress is most direct and immediate in Viet Nam. That country has come a long way since the days when the Indo-China war was brought to a halt by the first Geneva Conference of 1954. Relative initial peace and a major land reform and other programs of self help have restored agricultural production and lifted it to new highs. Internal communications as well as the transportation system have been expanded. Industrial development has begun in earnest. Responsible political institutions have begun to function, as attested to by the recent election. Social progress in education and health and other fields has been significant.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Vietnam Working Group Files, Lot 66 D 193, 22 I Vice President's Trip, GVN 1961, Secret. The source text was an attachment to Johnson's memorandum to the President, May 23, reporting on his mission to Asia. The text is printed in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pp. 159–166.

It is not clear whether this paper was intended to be an annex to the memorandum to the President, a draft of the memorandum itself, or the report from which the Vice President briefed the Cabinet on May 23. The copy of the memorandum to the President in OSD Files also has this attachment, but copies in the Johnson Library and the Policy Planning Files do not. (Washington National Records Center, RG 330, FRC 65 A 3078, Johnson Library, VP Security Files, VP Visit to SE Asia; and Department of State, S/P Files, Lot 67 D 548, Asia 1961)

Attached to the source text and the copy in OSD Files is a three-page paper on Thailand.

This great constructive work was made possible by the personal dedication of President Ngo Dinh Diem, the efforts of the Vietnamese people themselves and by the infusion of large amounts of United States aid. While this aid has gone largely for the support of a large military establishment, it has enabled the Vietnamese to join their own resources with our economic aid for many constructive undertakings. .

Unfortunately, the continuance of this constructive work is now threatened by a resurgence of Viet Minh terrorism in South Viet Nam. The number of these trained and organized disrupters has risen in recent months from three thousand to an estimated twelve thousand. Though relatively few in number, their capacity for disruption is very great. This is the nature of this type of activity as indicated by experience in Malaya, Burma and elsewhere. It may be that those with experience elsewhere with this problem could be most helpful in Viet Nam.

The basic problem in Viet Nam is not very different than it is for all of the nations of the region. The ordinary people need decent houses. They need schools. They need better conditions of health. They need the productive industries, the thriving agriculture and the safe and adequate transportation and communications which will make all of these things possible. They need an understanding government which is close to them and in which they feel a stake.

The will to achieve these improvements is present in Viet Nam. The determination and the energy to obtain them is present. Yet, the effort to achieve them is frustrated and disrupted by the agents of terrorism as well as by the ever-present shadow of the massive communist armed forces in North Viet Nam.

In short, that degree of material security which acts to release the full and constructive energies of peoples is not present in Viet Nam. Unless it is forthcoming in the near future, the great efforts and sacrifices, the vast amounts of aid which have poured into this country in the interests of peace and security may go down the drain.

I am assured by responsible officials—military and civilian—of this government and the government of Viet Nam, that Viet Nam can be made secure against the depredations of the organized terrorists who roam the countryside. I am assured, further, by these officials that the country can be made reasonably secure against invasion by the Viet Minh from the north.

An increase in military aid will be necessary for this purpose. New methods and new tactics for dealing with the problem of terrorism will be required. This will not be a short-term proposition. It will not be cheap. Yet, if this effort will in fact produce the security necessary for progress in freedom in Viet Nam, as those

who are expert in these matters say that it will, then it is in our interests as well as the interests of the Vietnamese people and all free nations that the effort be made. The price of the failure to make the sacrifices now in Viet Nam will be paid for later in the increased jeopardy to the United States and other free nations. The failure to act vigorously to stop the killing now in Viet Nam may well be paid for later with the lives of Americans all over Asia.

Let me stress, however, that a mere increase in the level of military aid on our part to Viet Nam will not necessarily solve the difficulty. There must be new methods for the use of all such aid. It must be provided under clear-cut plans mutually agreed upon. These plans must be pursued with great vigor on the part of the Vietnamese and with the cooperation of other free nations as well as our own if this job is to be done.

Most important, there must be a simultaneous, vigorous and integrated attack on the economic, social and other ills of the Vietnamese peoples. The leadership and initiative in this attack must rest with the Vietnamese leaders. But our aid program must be closely integrated with practical plans of the Vietnamese. The agents of the aid program must work closely with the Vietnamese and their constructive effect will be clearly felt by the Vietnamese people as a whole. It would be most helpful in this connection if the Joint Economic Commission referred to in the communiqué which was issued in Saigon at the conclusion of my visit could be named and begin to function without delay.

There is a serious and immediate challenge to peace and freedom in Vietnam. It can be met if Vietnam and this country and other free countries will face it and act vigorously to meet it.

[Here follow sections E and F, Thailand and concluding observations.]

60. Report by the Vice President [1]

[Washington, undated.]

VIET NAM

A. General Observations

The situation in Viet Nam is more stable than is indicated by newspaper and other reports reaching Washington in recent weeks. Economic conditions within the city of Saigon are at least superficially good and that, in itself for the short run, is a prop to stability. Similarly, conditions in the rural areas are not believed to be desperate, although merchants in Saigon complain in some cases they are unable to supply their normal customers in the provinces due to increased Viet Cong activity.

The picture we receive at home has been colored by journalistic sensationalism. It may also be distorted by these other factors:

1. An obsessive concern with security on the part of many of our mission people and a tendency to incorporate this concern into interpretations of the general situation. After all, occasional murders in Rock Creek Park, deplorable as they may be, do not mean that the United States is about to fall apart.

2. A conscious or unconscious desire in various quarters to stimulate the flow of United States aid.

3. An excessive reliance by our mission on the evaluations of the situation by Vietnamese government officials, often checked only against other government sources or discontented Vietnamese intellectuals who are in opposition to the present government. This reliance stems in part at least from the government's discouraging of travel by Americans outside Saigon on alleged grounds of security.

4. An assumption, that because conditions have turned bad in Laos they must inevitably turn bad in Viet Nam.

To say that conditions in Viet Nam are not as they appear to be in Washington is not to say that they are not serious. There are certainly Viet Minh terrorists in the jungles and rice-paddies. Vietnamese government officials are being assassinated in significant numbers. There is anti-government, non-communist plotting going on in the city of Saigon. Yet, we must keep our perspective. We

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[1] Source: University of Montana, Mansfield Papers, Series XXII, Box 110, Folder 3. Secret. No drafting or clearance information is given on the source text. A copy of this report was sent to Nolting by Cottrell as an enclosure to a letter dated May 29, along with the memorandum to the President, dated May 23, see footnote 1, *supra*. Cottrell noted in the covering letter that the President's brother-in-law, Stephen Smith, had briefed him on the previous day about the visit to Saigon. (Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878, 350 GVN–TF)

must not react in panic and in consequence, perhaps, do precisely that which will worsen the situation.

The perspective which seems closest to reality is that the existing political-military structure based largely on Ngo Dinh Diem and a palace bureaucracy in Saigon is not in danger of imminent collapse. That structure is not likely to be suddenly upset except by one or more of the following contingencies:

1. The removal of Diem through assassination by communist or non-communist opponents.
2. The removal of Diem by a palace-military coup—not an impossibility but an improbability for the present.
3. The sudden termination or drastic reduction of United States aid.
4. An actual invasion in preponderant force by the Viet Minh from the North.

Apart from these possibilities there is nevertheless a serious danger in Viet Nam. It is the danger of the progressive disintegration of the government's hold on the nation. This deterioration can be brought about by a combination of two factors:

1. The people of Viet Nam, in increasing numbers, may be terrorized or attracted into the Viet Minh camp.
2. The government and bureaucracy may fail to maintain and intensify its responsiveness to the social, economic and political needs of the people of Viet Nam, particularly in the rural areas.

Of these two factors, the second may well be of equal, if not greater significance, although it is not so seen by the present government or even by the preponderance of our own official observers.

In any event, if the present trend continues, there is the danger that the government will become a glittering facade. It will come to rest in the end, not on its people, but on a modern military establishment and an oriental bureaucracy both maintained for the indefinite future primarily by the United States Treasury. The power which is inherent in the ordinary Vietnamese people will be left to others to organize. In present circumstances, "others" can only be the Communist Vietnamese since there is little promise that effective leadership will emerge from the non-communist opposition to Ngo Dinh Diem at this time.

If the point of no return in the present trend is reached—that is, if the preponderance of the people move from support of or at least acquiescence in the rule of the government to support of or acquiescence in the Viet Minh movement—a grave dilemma will be posed for our policies. Then, whatever aid we supply to the government to fight communism in the abstract will also be directed, in the specific, against the Vietnamese people. And if we use our own forces to help

put down Communist rebellion in South Viet Nam we will also bear the onus of helping to put down the Vietnamese people.

It should be emphasized that this point of no return has not yet been reached. It is probably not even on the immediate horizon despite the panic-type reports that have originated of late in Viet Nam. Nevertheless, the danger flags are flying. One indicator is the increase in Viet Minh terrorists from three or four thousand to 12,000 despite reported heavy casualties inflicted on them by government forces. Another, is the increasing tendency of the palace bureaucracy to isolate itself and President Diem from the people. Still another is the significant level of disaffection with the government which, although to some extent chronic, is present in the highly educated and politically conscious group. While numerically small this group is of importance in Viet Nam. It is the principal recruiting ground for dedicated public servants and high political leaders. Members of this group who are alienated by the government, will move in other directions, first to the non-communist opposition and if that offers no outlet, ultimately, to the Viet Minh. A disturbing number of this group is already in the first stage of alienation.

A final indication of the danger is the fact that the ordinary people of the cities and probably even more of the rural areas are starved for leadership with understanding and warmth. There is an enormous popular enthusiasm and great popular power waiting to be brought forth by friendly personal political leadership. But it cannot be evoked by men in white linen suits whose contact with the ordinary people is largely through the rolled-up windows of a Mercedes-Benz.

B. Principal Conclusions

1. The existing government in Saigon is the only realistic alternative to Viet Minh control in South Viet Nam. At this time, there is no other non-communist leadership which, in all realism, may be expected to replace the present military-political-bureaucratic structure that has been developed in Saigon.

2. There is no question of the will of the Diem government and its military forces to resist the Viet Minh communists, there is some question as to their capacity to do so effectively and as to the general efficacy of their present methods. And they certainly cannot resist it without continued and substantial aid.

3. The need has long been recognized that the government must develop stronger popular support. In theory, the government recognizes this need. In practice, there is grave question that the Vietnamese bureaucracy is now characterized by that degree of

self-dedication and self-sacrifice which would serve to develop such support.

4. The government appears to be placing increasing reliance on military measures for producing stability and relatively less emphasis on popular political, economic and social measures. To some extent this is inevitable in view of the stepped-up campaign of Viet Minh terrorism. To what extent, however, is not clear. And there are disturbing suggestions that the government not only fears the Viet Cong cadres and terrorists but its own people as well.

5. Without the increased level of aid that has now been offered, clearly the prospect would have been for a progressive but not necessarily rapid deterioration of the position of the Vietnamese government. Nevertheless, this aid is not in itself a guarantee that the deterioration will be checked. It is likely to prove effective *only* if the military campaign which the aid is designed to produce is pressed with vigor and yet with great discretion. Against the Viet Cong who terrorize the general populace, military force must be firm and powerful. But military force must not be used indiscriminately in an effort to stamp out all resistance to local government officials. Much of this resistance may well be justified as the only outlet against exploitation and oppression. How much, we do not know because the information we have is not adequate. But to the extent that such is the case military action will be costly and, probably increasingly ineffective. The only response which will meet this type of resistance is the redress of the grievances by the efforts of the government itself.

6. There is a great need for more direct and accurate observation and reports of developments outside Saigon by our own officials. The great bulk of the information now available is derived second-hand either from the Vietnamese government or non-communist Vietnamese opposition sources. Neither may be regarded as very objective or disinterested.

7. In present circumstances there is no visible solution to the instability in Viet Nam on the basis of neutralization. But if the steps we are now taking work effectively then, in time, the Saigon government may become less dependent on aid and lay a valid claim to represent the entire Vietnamese people, north and south. If the steps fail, however, we shall be able to hold even the present unsatisfactory situation only by larger and larger infusions of aid. Ultimately, perhaps even our direct military involvement may be required to hold the situation, a step which is not sought by the Vietnamese or required by the situation at this time.

C. Recommendations

The following course of action is recommended.

1. We should think in terms of a three year plan of increased aid—military and economic. The plan should be liberal but not extravagant. We should insist in private and with great tact that the details of this program be put on paper *before* the increased aid flows. The details should include specific measurable goals, specific responsibilities for the Vietnamese as well as ourselves, specific techniques, directed to the improvement of the safety, not only of local officials, but of the Vietnamese *people* and the improvement of the livelihood of these people.

2. We should make clear, in private, that barring an unmistakable and massive invasion of South Viet Nam from without we have no intention of employing combat U.S. forces in Viet Nam or using even naval or air-support which is but the first step in that direction. If the Vietnamese government backed by a three-year liberal aid program cannot do this job, then we had better remember the experience of the French who wound up with several hundred thousand men in Vietnam and were still unable to do it. And all this, without engaging a single Chinese or Russian. Before we take any such plunge we had better be sure we are prepared to become bogged down chasing irregulars and guerillas over the rice fields and jungles of Southeast Asia while our principal enemies China and the Soviet Union stand outside the fray and husband their strength.

3. This new aid commitment plunges us very deeply into the Vietnamese internal situation. The attitude of our mission people must begin immediately to reflect that depth.

a. Our military aid people must get out of their dress uniforms and into their fatigues more often and out of the cities and into the jungles.

b. Our economic aid people in far greater numbers will have to leave Saigon behind and move into the provinces, towns and villages.

c. Our foreign service officers must range the country on a systematic basis and observe directly and report first-hand and accurately. Further they should be attached in considerable numbers to the M.A.A.G. operations to determine accurately and to advise accurately whether the new efforts at pacification are directed with discretion at the Viet Cong terrorists, rather than at those who have legitimate grievances. We must insist at the beginning that the Vietnamese government permit our representatives and military to go anywhere at all times in the country, regardless of the security situation. There will be perhaps some casualties in this approach but if we are not prepared to take them in small numbers now, how will we take them in the great numbers which will be involved if we become directly involved? This job cannot be done with talk of sacrifices from the comfort and safety of Saigon and Washington.

4. Our dealing with the Vietnamese government must be sensitive of their feelings but absolutely firm in the application of the agreed plan. We have got to have regard for their ways but we have also got to keep our own self-respect and guard against obsequiousness and the waste of our people's resources which are beginning to dry up for this sort of undertaking.

5. Our mission people must, by example and by subtle persuasion encourage the Saigon government from the President down to get close to the people, to mingle with them, to listen for their grievances and to act on them. Handshakes on the streets of Vietnamese leaders and people is the concept that has got to be pursued. And shirt-sleeves must be the hallmark of Americans. Unless we get this approach which we do not now have, on the part of Vietnamese officials or Americans this effort is not going to succeed.

6. By persuasion we must attempt to strengthen the National Assembly and other democratic institutions in Viet Nam. There is a practical reason to pursue this course apart from our own dedication to the practice of freedom. These institutions must throw up new leadership and some form of reliable transition will be imperative in the event something happens to Diem. In addition, these institutions can serve to rally the educated group to service with the government.

There is a chance for success in Viet Nam but there is not a moment to lose. We need to move along the above lines and we need to begin now, today, to move.

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61. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President [1]

Washington, May 28, 1961

1. It is my view that the Viet-Nam situation is extremely dangerous to the peace and that we must push on all fronts to force a deflation of that crisis before it builds to a situation like that in Laos. If it comes to an open battle, the inhibitions on our going in will be less than in Laos; but the challenge to Russia and China will

[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Secret.

be even greater. Moreover, I fear what the strains of the current guerrilla battle may do to the political situation within Viet-Nam.

2. We are now working on two fronts. First, to build Diem's strength. Second, to heighten the awareness of the international community about the border issue and to make the ICC the focus of the Laos conference. This could help substantially in Viet-Nam.

3. But I believe a third front on which we must work is Mr. Khrushchev himself. Thus my efforts to get the town to focus on the role of Viet-Nam at Vienna. Thus, the attached memorandum.[2]

[1] No memorandum was attached to the source text. In the course of their meeting at Vienna, June 3–4, Kennedy and Khrushchev scarcely mentioned Vietnam. Memoranda of their conversations are in Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 66 D 110, CF 1906. A two-page briefing paper on Vietnam, FMK-B-3, May 26, is *ibid.*, CF 1905.

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62. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State[1]

Saigon, May 20, 1961—6 p.m.

1800. Task Force VN 3.[2] Reference Deptel 1414.[3] Task Force Saigon considers new bilateral arrangement with GVN neither necessary nor desirable at present time.

1. Presumably purpose of new bilateral would be to reassure Diem of US support and restore his confidence in firmness US determination not permit Communist seizure of Vietnam. Believe this already accomplished to large extent by Vice President Johnson's visit and concrete actions flowing therefrom. Moreover, believe way we handle ourselves in connection with Laos likely be more important touchstone GVN confidence in our determination than discussion of bilateral arrangement, on theory actions speak louder than words.

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/5-2061. Secret; Priority. Repeated to Bangkok and to CINCPAC for FidAd.

[2] The numbers in this and subsequent telegrams to and from Task Force Saigon refer to the points in Document 56.

[3] Telegram 1414, May 19, stated that negotiations for a new bilateral agreement with Vietnam should not begin until further notice and asked the Embassy in Saigon to transmit its views on the subject. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/5-1961)

2. GVN itself has not expressed interest in such new arrangement and on basis Diem's past attitude toward association with SEATO it is questionable that GVN would be particularly responsive to idea. In past whenever Diem has been asked whether he wishes join SEATO, his answer has been that Geneva Accord precludes GVN entry into military alliance. Diem's motivation probably is that as SEATO protocol state Vietnam receives whatever benefits SEATO provides without liabilities which would arise from membership in SEATO, e.g., Geneva Accord problems, Communist propaganda, et cetera.

3. While Diem probably now dubious full membership of SEATO would take effective action, he has always realistically viewed US as real source SEATO strength and thus of guarantee to Vietnam under SEATO protocol. Diem would therefore probably feel that US would be about as likely take action under SEATO, either unilaterally or jointly with those SEATO powers which are willing, as under bilateral arrangement. Under indirect US planning guidance all VN contingency war plans are based on expressed assumption that US and/or SEATO forces will intervene immediately (24–72 hours) after overt attack on VN. This assumption so well established that he would probably therefore view bilateral arrangement as adding little to existing tacit guarantee.

4. Type of US–GVN bilateral being discussed would represent direct violation Article 19, Geneva Accords. While Embassy has recommended US–GVN denunciation Articles 16 and 17 (Embtel 1752 [4]), believe similar action re Article 19 cannot be justified on basis requirements GVN self defense, ICC failures, or DRV violation, and not of much real value in meeting present Communist threat. Moreover, inclined believe political repercussions flowing from such violation Article 19 might provoke ICC into withdrawing from Vietnam taking with it such deterrent as it offers against DRV direct aggression.

Despite above, we would not wish exclude possible resort to bilateral arrangement at some point in future when it may be more needed or useful than at present in bolstering GVN confidence in US.

Nolting

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[4] Telegram 1752, May 16, stressed the need to consult with the British, Canadians, and possibly the French concerning any increase in military equipment or personnel in Vietnam beyond the limits that the Control Commission could agree to. (*Ibid.*, 751G.00/5-1661; printed also in *Declassified Documents, 1975*, p. 319A)

63. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Saigon [1]

Washington, May 26, 1961—11:40 p.m.

1457. Task Force VN. Saigon's 1752 and 1788, New Delhi's 2782, Deptel 3404 to New Delhi. [2] On May 15, Asst. Secretary McConaughy called in representatives British, French and Canadian Embassies [3] to inform them that due DRV violations we have been required expand MAAG by about a hundred, that we did not seek justify this on basis MAAG ceiling, but rather as response DRV infractions Geneva Accords. McConaughy emphasized we not overthrowing Geneva Accords, but did not wish our hands tied by following them in all respects while DRV violating them. He emphasized this personnel was for training. (Department intends soon inform Indians of above only.) FYI. There will be considerable further increases in MAAG/Viet-Nam beyond 100 referred to above. End FYI.

On May 19 Ledward, British Embassy, asked Departmental Officer how we planned handle MAAG increase and whether Indians would be informed since problems likely arise. Ledward said Fon Off on being informed above conversation with McConaughy had replied it well understood reasons MAAG increase and had no reservations, but was anxious be informed our next move. Departmental officer replied decision not yet final, but it appeared unlikely we would seek justify any further increases as being within MAAG ceiling (although it could be argued as basis MAAG increase that there were about 1500 trainers in VN at time Geneva Accords). Our tentative view was that due vital threat to GVN posed by DRV directed guerrillas in Viet-Nam, GVN entitled defend itself without being limited by restrictions on bringing in men and materiel set forth Articles 16 and 17 Geneva Accords for VN.

Dept officer continued main reason GVN fighting for its existence today was that these restrictions had consistently been ignored

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751G.00/5-2261. Secret; Priority. Drafted by Wood; cleared with McConaughy, Admiral Heinz, Johnson (G), L, NEA, EUR, IO, and S/S; and signed by Secretary Rusk. Also sent to London, Ottawa, Paris, and New Delhi and repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd, Vientiane, Phnom Penh, Bangkok, and Geneva.

[2] Regarding telegram 1752, see footnote 4, *supra*. Telegram 1788, May 24, restated the need to consult with members of the Control Commission. (Department of State, Central Files, 751G.00/5-2461) Telegrams 2782 and 3404, May 22 and 24, discussed various aspects of making an approach to Nehru on this problem. (*Ibid.*, 751G.00/5-2161 and 5-2261)

[3] Memoranda of McConaughy's conversations with the British and French are *ibid.*, 751G.00/5-1561

by DRV since Geneva Accords went into effect. However, whatever decision was reached with GVN on Geneva Accords, we would not seek contravene main purpose Geneva Accords which was to prevent one side from violating the cease-fire and attacking the other. GVN was being clearly attacked by DRV through guerrilla methods; GVN certainly did not intend to cross demarcation line and attack DRV. Its aim was to defend itself and preserve its independence. In this we intended support GVN.

Action addressees should also point out that U.S.–GVN decision not be limited by Articles 16 and 17 would be in accord with recognized principle international law that material breach of a treaty obligation by one party relieves the other of full compliance with its obligations until first party resumes observance (II Yearbook International Law Commission 1959, Articles 18 and 20 on law treaties, pp. 45, 66, 66–71). The U.S. specifically intends that this action will be limited to period during which communists continue violate their treaty obligations. The U.S. will return to complete compliance as soon as the communists discontinue their violations.

Addressees should also emphasize that U.S. and GVN consider DRV has continuously breached Article 24 Geneva Accords which states that armed forces each party "shall commit no act and undertake no operation against the other party." (Copies Geneva Agreement pouched to addressees January 13, 1960.) There is continuing evidence that armed DRV personnel acting under DRV orders have for years traveled from DRV territory into Viet-Nam and carried out hostile acts. The Kontum attack of October, 1960 when several hundred armed persons attacked across the Vietnamese frontier in unit formation is one example.

Finally, should emphasize this decision does not reflect desire upset ICC mechanisms. As set forth Department's 3404 to New Delhi, we believe that mechanism of ICC should be perfected. The present situation in Viet-Nam results to some extent from the fact that the ICC as set up by the 1954 Agreements has not been able to act effectively. This is why we have urged that the ICC mechanism in Laos be made effective.

For Saigon

Above rationale and procedures outlined below should be discussed promptly with GVN. Following points should be made to GVN:

1. We are anxious move ahead very soon in cooperation with GVN on lines this message and would welcome early expression GVN views. It is hoped that Ambassador Nolting may be able inform Embassies London, Paris, and Ottawa very soon of GVN concurrence. Embassy New Delhi to make its approach four days

thereafter. We think it important to make U.S.–GVN position on MAAG clear to world opinion soonest.

2. We hope GVN will consider making its own démarche at New Delhi; as well as at Paris, London or Ottawa if it so desires. Most important will be GVN note to ICC. We hope Embassy and GVN will be able coordinate these moves, in advance. Urge GVN use suggested rationale.

FYI. As soon as embassy satisfied re GVN concurrence, it should notify other action addressees.

Department will inform GVN Embassy here four days after transmission this telegram unless contrary advice received. End FYI.

For London, Ottawa, Geneva and Paris

Suggest upon receipt telegram Saigon indicating GVN concurrence this be discussed confidentially along above lines with British, Canadians and French and that they be informed we intend bring up matter in New Delhi four days after receipt this telegram.

For New Delhi only

Unless addressee posts perceive strong objections, GOI should be informed of above four working days after receipt telegram from Saigon indicating GVN concurrences. [4]

Rusk

[4] The Vietnamese agreed to follow the proposal outlined in this telegram on May 29 (Telegram 1813 from Saigon, *ibid.* 751K.00/5–2961)

The Department of State on June 1 instructed Nolting to tell Diem not to send a note to the Control Commission but await further views on the timing of an approach to India (Telegram 1484, *ibid.* 751K.5–MSP/5–3161)

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64. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, May 27, 1961—5 p.m.

1803. Task Force VN. In full talk with Thuan May 26, he led off by saying President Diem would like for me to accompany him on tour of country in near future, which I accepted (dates not fixed).

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5–MSP/5–2761. Confidential; Priority. Also sent to CINCPAC for PolAd and Vientiane and repeated to London, Ottawa, Paris, Geneva, New Delhi, Bangkok, and Phnom Penh.

Thuan then said (Embtel 1794[2]) Diem has carefully considered question introduction of US combat brigade as trainers, and had concluded that this would not be desirable at present time. Diem thought that an addition of up to one thousand MAAG personnel, over and above present number, would be desirable and could be accomplished through ICC decision. These, he believed, would suffice for training additional Army units. For training civil guard and self-defense corps, Diem felt that US military personnel in civilian clothes should be used. These would be over and above the number MAAG military personnel mentioned above. GVN envisaged direct training.

I told Thuan that we do not wish to proceed against his Government's judgment in these matters and that I would wish to have General McGarr's and Washington's views before making any final comments; but that certain preliminary comments occurred to me: (1) an obvious relation exists between the number of US trainers needed and the number of Vietnamese forces to be trained, their time-phasing, etc., (2) another factor was how we should decide together to handle the whole ICC matter, especially Articles 16 and 17 of Geneva Accords; (3) another factor was whether or not training of civil guard and self-defense corps by US military personnel in civilian clothes was a good idea militarily or politically. I had some doubts on this in light Laotian experiences; (4) still another factor was whether it is a good tactic to argue for an ICC-approved increase in MAAG personnel when it is apparent that the final requirement is likely to exceed number which ICC will approve. To me, a more forthright approach to problem presented by ICC had considerable merit. In summary, I wondered whether the way proposed by Thuan of meeting the problem was adequate from the military point of view and whether it was good from the political point of view.

Thuan seemed interested in idea that Articles 16 and 17 of the Geneva Accords might be ignored, but worried that this might bring about the abrogation by the Commies of the entire Accords, and/or the withdrawal of the ICC. He said that the GVN felt that Geneva accords and ICC had certain deterrent value worth preserving. Thuan suggested as alternative position that we should work together to sound out opinion of our allies re denunciation of Articles 16 and 17, while at same time proceeding to build up numerical strength of MAAG under existing regulations. This matter was left inconclusive.

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[2] Telegram 1794, May 24, reported that Nolting discussed the introduction of fully equipped U.S. combat units as trainers for the Vietnamese Army with Thuan on May 19 and on two subsequent occasions without result. (*Ibid.*, 751K.5-MSP/5-2461)

We need Washington reactions to our Embtels 1752 and 1788.[3]

I then discussed Thuan's trip to Washington, and asked him tell me the major things that would be taken up in President Diem's letter to President Kennedy. He said letter had not yet taken final shape, but would include (a) a request for approval of GVN army build up to 100,000 over and above 170,000 already agreed, over two and one-half year period; (b) cost estimates in MAP and in local currency for a force of that size; (c) some suggestions re long-term economic plan for South Viet-Nam. I told him that we had recently submitted comments to Washington on a possible build-up to 200,000 (increase by 30,000 over present-agreed force), that I did not know what our reaction would be to a larger figure, but that I was sure we would like to hear their considered views and their justification for such a force. My impression was that we were thinking in terms of a phased build-up to see if we went along what the ultimate requirement should be. Thuan said the figure for an additional 100,000 came to them from his generals, who had been asked to submit their estimates of what it would take to (a) guard against overt frontal attacks; (b) control borders, and (c) mount successful anti-guerilla operations.

I made clear to Thuan, pursuant Deptel 1433,[4] that while our officials in Washington were anxious to hear President Diem's views on matters raised by President Kennedy's letter[5] about Vice President's talks, there would obviously be many matters including costsharing, to be worked out specifically and in detail after his return, which could not be done finally in Washington and could be better done here. In other words, final agreements should be negotiated out in Saigon. Thuan understood and readily agreed to this.

I then brought up subject which President Diem had discussed with me at length in Dalat[6]—namely, his hope that we could work out together a comprehensive, joint, long-range plan embracing measures in various fields. Diem had stressed the need to have such plans fit the local situation here, rather than having them "made in America". I told Thuan I felt sure my Government would be

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[3] See footnote 2, *supra*.

[4] Telegram 1433, May 23, instructed the Embassy in Saigon to tell Thuan that U.S. agencies would listen sympathetically and give his views serious attention, but would not commit the United States prior to completion of the financial team's study and until Nolting and Diem had reached agreement in Saigon. (Department of State Central Files, 751.5-MSP/5-1361)

[5] See Document 48.

[6] Nolting recalled that Diem had invited him and his family to Dalat the weekend of May 20–21 to review all the things that had been discussed with the Vice President and to evolve a working plan for a cooperative effort. (Department of State, Office of the Historian, Vietnam Interviews, May 25, 1984) No other record of the discussions at Dalat has been found.

interested in developing Diem's thoughts along these lines; we did wish to help in ways which would fit local situation, and I personally thought a high-level joint planning group here would be most useful if GVN wished to suggest it. I said we had a number of ideas in several interrelated fields which could be discussed by such a group, and perhaps then referred to joint subcommittee for detailed study and eventual implementation. Thuan replied, while GVN limited re expert personnel, he felt something could and should be done along these lines. Mentioned fact that GVN would have "opposite numbers" for US financial and economic experts expected around June 17.[1] He could not say who they would be at this point, but promised to have them ready. He mentioned fact that military planning already going forward in joint committee. I expressed our willingness to have, and my own personal availability to serve on, a joint steering committee if President Diem wished to set one up. (I did this not only because I think it would be best way to have our task force proposals studied systematically, but also to meet Diem's earlier insistence that plans and actions here should have an indigenous character, in order to promote his basic aim of encouraging a counter-dynamic on the part of his people against the Communists. I hope he will follow up on this.)

In course of conversation, I asked Thuan to expedite giving us figures which Gardiner had requested some time ago re aid requirements, in order that these might be available for study by special Financial and Economic Mission. He said they were being worked up and he agreed to expedite.

Nolting

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[1] Regarding the establishment of a special group of U.S. financial and economic experts (the Staley Group or Special Financial Group), see Document 72.

65. Memorandum From the President to the Secretary of State [1]

Washington, May 27, 1961.

I am extremely anxious that we implement any promises that the Vice President may have made in the various countries he visited during his recent trip. I would appreciate it if you would put someone in charge to check on these promises and send me a report on it after my return from Europe next week. [2]

John Kennedy

[1] Source: Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 65 D 366, CF 1883. Attached to a memorandum from G to S/O, June 1, which stated that the President made a similar request to the Secretary of Defense and that the Vice President made an oral request along these lines.

[2] The President was in Vienna, June 3–4, for talks with Premier Khrushchev.

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66. Telegram From the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (McGarr) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Lemnitzer) [1]

Saigon, June 7, 1961—5:45 p.m.

SGN 376. Increasing pressure being brought to bear by State Department to bring British, Malayan and other third country trainers into anti-guerrilla training program of RVNAF which is MAAG's mission. Have pointed out strongly the confusion that will result if coordinated counter-insurgency doctrine and training which MAAG has developed, using best of other country experience applicable here, should now be redirected and diluted by individual third country trainers with different concepts and methods. Diem had assured me these third country trainers in MAAG field not desired. However, Ambassador here and Ken Young new Ambassador Thailand leaving for Washington visit today making concerted effort change Diem's mind by indicating VN has much to learn from British and Australians. I do not agree and am [not?] certain history would show U.S. had to be "bailed out" by them as in past. I am

[1] Source: National Defense University, Lemnitzer Papers, 1961, Eyes Only Messages In Secret, Eyes Only, Exclusive.

unable here to pin down "Thompson group" qualifications and, more important, its authority; only that they are anti-guerrilla "experts." Feel we must insist they convince us by furnishing concrete anti-guerrilla material for our evaluation and consideration before we approve their coming. Also, if State forces it, that it must be understood any actions by them in MAAG field are controlled by MAAG.

Now that MAAG has fought through major RVNAF reorganization and strengthening of command structure, taken over Civil Guard training, and gotten approval on a long overdue 20,000 RVNAF increase, we are just beginning to show positive results as manifested by increasing offensive operations against Viet Cong. I am convinced US prestige as well as that of US military will suffer in Southeast Asia if third country individuals are to be forced into MAAG field here. I have no objection to their operations in other fields and this is already mostly agreed by the country team. This should suffice to "show the flag." If State Department insistence result of political expediency, then believe strongly Defense Department must, to protect itself, go on record that we are now progressing in a military sense and have already set the stage organization and strengthwise for further successes. New approach by Ken Young here yesterday with Thuan and me was have "international counter guerrilla warfare school," which has been considered by Washington Task Force, for location somewhere in Far East definitely located South Vietnam. MAAG is resisting this maneuver for reasons above and in addition, because feel it will conflict with and retard our hot war effort by sowing seeds of doubt our methods with other countries trying to get into act operationally. Better results obtainable by location of "international counter-guerrilla warfare school" in say Malaya, with field research work here by its "students." I am convinced participation by third country trainers would be militarily counter-productive MAAG's mission here.

As a fall back position, if forced to have "international counter-guerrilla warfare school," in Vietnam, believe we could possibly compromise on A[illegible] trainers, such as Filipinos and Chinese Nationalists, as they [illegible]ally knowledgeable, would be more acceptable to GVN, mix better ethnically and would not downgrade US effort to extent British participation.

Augmentation of RVNAF is being delayed by US failure so far to assure the GVN of the necessary defense support funds as differentiated from MAP funds already promised. While admittedly an economic problem, the GVN high officials say they cannot by themselves finance the local currency costs of the 20,000 augmentation presently approved, the 30,000 additional augmentation proposed nor the 100,000 augmentation to achieve the requisite 15

division force which they are convinced they need and with which MAAG analysis agrees, all concurrently with maintaining paramilitary forces which they also supporting local currency-wise. In view GVN economic base, cannot expect GVN carry this added security load. In addition attempting this would result serious curtailment of Diem's economic and social programs. USOM attitude here apparently strongly supported by ICA and State in Washington is to sit by and wait for Special Financial Group (SFG) to arrive and analyze economic and financial situation. This could take months and every day the RVNAF mobilization is further delayed is dangerous. These fiscal and diplomatic types fail or refuse to realize the time lag for training and equipping military forces.

In view feeling by GVN that we have not lived up to our commitments in the past, following on heels of deteriorating Laos situation and Vice President Johnson's statements here, more delay could well trigger an attitude of neutralism in both the military and certain dissident political circles which could be disastrous to US Presidential policy pronouncements again reiterated in Kennedy address this morning emphasizing deeds not words.[2] General Sibley accompanying Secretary Defense Thuan to Washington and will see you. Sincerely hope Secretary Defense Thuan will be given solid commitments on defense support aid. President GVN defense budget for 1962 limited by USOM to 3.150 billion piastres, whereas 7.7 billion piastres required if RVNAF augmentation is not to suffer further delays.

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[2] For text of President Kennedy's address to the American people, June 6, concerning his meeting with Khrushchev at Vienna, June 3–4, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1961*, pp. 441–446.

67. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State[1]

Saigon, June 9, 1961—8 p.m.

1863. Task Force VN 25. Reference: Deptels 1494, 1496.[2] In course of discussions with Thuan on June 8, following points arose relevant GVN thinking concerning financing present and future increase force level. Meeting had been arranged in advance at Thuan's request to clarify certain matters before Thuan's trip to Washington. It was understood that we were not negotiating, but simply seeking clarification. Thuan was supported by Secretary Economy Thanh, economist Buu Hoan from National Bank (who will accompany Thuan to Washington), and Thinh, Deputy Budget Director. Gardiner and Howe of USOM accompanied me.

(1) Thuan opened subject of aid level to GVN for FY 62. In requesting $30 million additional aid in memorandum to Vice President Johnson,[3] Thuan said GVN intended to seek a total of $169 million for FY 62 on basis 170,000 force level. They calculate this on basis 1961 aid level at $110 million new money, $15 million pipeline draw down, and $14 million PL–480,[4] plus $30 million additional needed for force level of 170,000. $169 million, with customs duties added thereto, was judged to be adequate to finance armed forces of 170,000 (and presumably leave a balance for economic projects although GVN representatives did not say so). Import list submitted to USOM by Ministry Economy, June 3, representing $149 million, was disowned as not responsive to military requirement.

(2) $169 million aid requirement calculated by GVN on basis 30 percent flexible waiver "Buy American" restriction, and freedom from 50 percent shipping restriction. (On latter point, believe we made convincing argument that GVN funds could be devoted to buying cheaper freight, leaving greater amount in US aid funds for purchase commodities.)

(3) Thuan agreed that level of GVN foreign exchange reserves should not rise above approximate present level of $210 million, but also insisted that present foreign exchange reserves should not be depleted to finance additional forces.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/6-961. Secret. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Dated June 3 and 6, respectively. The former requested information on the Vietnamese military budget, while the latter asked for cost estimates for FY 61 and 62 military assistance program requirements. (*Ibid.*, 751K.5-MSP/6-261)

[3] See footnote 4, Document 54.

[4] Formally entitled the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act, enacted July 10, 1954. P.L. 480 provided for the donation of U.S. agricultural surpluses to friendly governments. For text, see 68 Stat. 454.

We made it clear that final resolution of aid level for 1962 and subsequent years could not be accomplished until SFG advice available and funds voted for FY 1962. We very much hoped, however, that during this summer we and GVN could agree on a sound long-term financial plan. Meanwhile, I hoped nothing would be allowed to interfere with build-up of forces to 20,000 agreed increase as fast as possible. This was regarded as necessary by both GVN and US. Was it true, I asked, that the build-up of the 20,000 was being delayed for financial reasons?

Thuan said, yes, inductions are now being deferred since GVN does not have funds to take on additional obligations. I emphasized that we were not trading, but exploring possibilities within framework of our mutual desire to raise 20,000 troops as quickly as possible. Thuan then threw out proposal that GVN should finance as much of 20,000 increment as could be raised for FY 61, but said this would have to be done at cost of stand-still on certain economic-military-social projects now under way (mentioning roads, canals, and land development). I told him that US considers many of these projects as necessary in the fight against the Viet Cong, and that I do not wish at this time to be in position of recommending priorities between necessary projects. This proposal of Thuan's was later withdrawn, after GVN budget man had pointed out that transfer of funds from other budget appropriations to military is not possible during current year (for reasons, we assume, appropriation law).

I persisted in exploring ways to continue inductions for the 20,000 and to finding method to pay for them without further loss of time. We calculated the sum involved to be about VN $350 million for the remainder calendar year 1961. Having withdrawn his original suggestion, Thuan then said that there were only two ways to meet this problem. (1) By borrowing from National Bank, (2) By cash grant from US. The first course GVN rejected as inflationary, and likely to cause criticism from IMF authorities due soon for annual consultations. The second alternative, I said, appeared impractical from our side, for reasons of lack of funds and on principle (i.e., cash grant in relation to over-all balance of payments position). As a personal suggestion, in order to solve the problem of 1961 payments without further loss of time and without prejudice to SFG and subsequent negotiations, I threw out the following. (1) That the cost for 1961 for the additional 20,000 be calculated as precisely as possible. (2) That Thuan then might suggest in Washington that the cost be divided between GVN's own funds and remaining counterpart and other US-controlled availabilities. (An agreed table of

counterpart, Section 402[3] and PL–480, utilization, was available, showing a remaining balance of $5.1 million equivalents (178.5 million piasters) unprogrammed after providing $15.9 million equivalents for 1961 military budget and $15.9 for economic projects.)

Thuan thought this idea had possibilities. I made clear that I could make no commitments. (*Comment:* I urge that this matter be cleared up promptly, either in Washington or on instructions here, in order that agreed force increase be not further delayed and to clear decks for study and negotiation on future program, perhaps involving much larger forces. To do so, in my judgment, would preserve and build confidence, keep up momentum, and enable us to work much more effectively in future negotiations.)

In responding to point that we consider it necessary to maintain economic projects which were part and parcel of counter-insurgency effort, Thuan said that GVN was taking steps to improve tax collections and back up certain tax rates. Tax revenues estimated by GVN to rise by VN $600 million in 1961 over 1960. Forecasts of exports and budget details requested by USOM in April were still not available. We urged that they be ready soon for SFG study; exports for 1961 were estimated by GVN at $70 million compared to $85 in 1960. We also requested breakdown proposed US aid-financed import list of $169 for fiscal 1962.

These discussions, I think, were useful in bringing clarification and perhaps in drawing positions together. Both Diem and Thuan mentioned their usefulness to me today (June 9). I repeat that we have not made any financial commitments here, and will not do so pending further instructions.

Nolting

[3] For text of Section 402 of the Mutual Defense Assistance Control Act of 1951 (the Battle Act), enacted October 26, 1951, see 65 Stat. 644.

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68. Editorial Note

Secretary of State for the Presidency Nguyen Dinh Thuan arrived in Washington on June 12 for a 6-day visit. That evening he dined with Assistant Secretary McConaughy, Cottrell, and members of the Staley Financial Group that were about to depart for Saigon. The next day, he met with McConaughy at 5:30. On June 14, Thuan met with Lansdale, President Kennedy, the Deputy Secretary and

Secretary of Defense, and General Lemnitzer, followed by a dinner given by the Vice President aboard the yacht *Sequoia*. On June 15, he met with Under Secretary of State Johnson, Secretary Rusk, the Managing Director of the Development Land Fund, Frank M. Coffin, and Rostow. Following meetings with Congressional leaders on June 16, Thuan left for New York before returning to Vietnam on June 17.

Only the memorandum of the conversation with the President is printed here. The meeting with McConaughy is cited in footnote 1 thereto. A record of the meeting with Coffin and copies of Thuan's schedule of meetings are in Department of State, Vietnam Working Group Files: Lot 66 D 193, 22.2 Thuan Visit GVN 1961. No records of the other meetings have been found.

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69. Memorandum of a Conversation, The White House, Washington, June 14, 1961, 10:15 a.m.[1]

SUBJECT

Aid to Viet Nam

PARTICIPANTS

President Kennedy
Assistant Secretary McConaughy
Secretary of State Nguyen Dinh Thuan
Chalmers B. Wood

The President opened the conversation by recalling his visit to Viet-Nam in 1951 and the fact that he had met President Diem at a luncheon given by Justice Douglas in 1957 during President Diem's visit to the United States.[2] He asked Mr. Thuan to convey his greetings to President Diem. After acknowledging the President's kind words Secretary Thuan gave the President a letter from Presi-

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files: 751K.5-MSP/6-1461. Secret. Drafted by Wood, cleared by McConaughy, and approved by the White House on July 22. A summary of the conversation was transmitted to Saigon in telegram 1526, June 15. (*Ibid.*: 751K.5-MSP/6-1561) McConaughy had a similar conversation with Thuan at 5:30 on June 13. A summary of this conversation was transmitted to Saigon in telegram 1525, June 13. (*Ibid.*)

[2] For documentation on Diem's visit to the United States, May 8–10, 1957, see *Foreign Relations, 1955–1957*, vol. I, pp. 792 ff.

dent Diem.[3] The President read the letter carefully and then explained to Mr. McConaughy that the letter requested U.S. support for an increase in the Vietnamese armed forces to a total of 270,000 men and that the cost of providing initial equipment for this increase in the size of the armed forces would come to about $175 million dollars, to be distributed over the 2½ year period needed to activate these units and that thereafter annual maintenance for this force would increase the military assistance program by about $20 million dollars a year.

The President then asked Mr. Thuan how much of the communist movement in Viet-Nam was indigenous. Mr. Thuan replied that during the Indo-China War the French had occupied only the cities and main roads. This had permitted the communists to occupy the country side and exercise their subversive influence over the population. Mr. Thuan also mentioned the flow of Viet Cong from North Viet-Nam to Viet-Nam, stating that Vietnamese armed forces had recently occupied reception centers on Route 9 which had been used by the Communists. Records in these reception centers showed that about 2,800 men had moved through them on their way south to Viet-Nam during a 4 month period.

The President then asked about cooperation with Cambodia. Mr. Thuan spoke of Prince Sihanouk's "versatile" qualities and commented that if Prince Sihanouk's policies appeared to be changeable it should be remembered that they were based on one unchanging assumption, namely Prince Sihanouk's belief that the communists would win in Asia and that he must tailor his policies accordingly.

The President then inquired about living conditions in North Viet-Nam. Mr. Thuan explained that life for the average citizen in North Viet-Nam was extremely difficult, that food and clothing were hard to obtain and that morale was low. The President then asked about the problems of infiltrating Vietnamese forces into North Viet-Nam. Mr. Thuan replied that a few highly trained troops were available but that if Viet-Nam were to risk these men in an attempt to stir up unrest in North Viet-Nam, the United States should be prepared to make a major effort to give them the full support needed to carry out such an action to a successful conclusion. The President then asked about the war in South Viet-Nam. Mr. Thuan replied that the South Vietnamese troops were having increasing success in their fight against the Viet Cong. An interesting index of this success Mr. Thuan said was that although the Vietnamese troops were kept on the line for long periods their rate of

[3] Dated June 9, for text, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pp. 167–173.

desertion was very low, and that those deserted did not desert to the Viet Cong but only to return home to see their families. On the other hand he said there had been increasingly large numbers of Viet Cong who had surrendered. As one of the difficulties faced by his country Mr. Thuan cited the length of the land and sea frontiers to be protected.

The President then asked how long it would take to get started on the 20,000 man increase in the Vietnamese armed forces from 150,000 to 170,000. Mr. Thuan explained that there has been a 6,000 man increase but that unfortunately the Vietnamese simply did not have the liquid assets necessary to pay the local costs of continuing this increase to 170,000. Vietnamese finances he continued had been stretched to the point where it had recently been necessary for them to cancel the International Fair scheduled for 1962 near Saigon. After further discussion it was agreed that Mr. McConaughy would report to the President on the following day as to how this matter could be resolved in order to continue the mobilization as rapidly as possible.

The President then discussed with Mr. Thuan President Diem's request for support in increasing the Vietnamese army to 270,000. He asked that President Diem's letter be made immediately available to Mr. McNamara who was testifying before the Senate the same day, in order that the Senators could better understand and appreciate the magnitude of the task involved in helping Viet-Nam to maintain its independence. In discussing the share which Viet-Nam might pay the President asked if it was not true that Viet-Nam had a foreign exchange reserve of over $200 million. Mr. Thuan said it was true but he expressed his government's fear that if this reserve were drawn down below the $200 million mark most of the capital in Viet-Nam which was primarily foreign owned (French and Chinese) would find ways of leaving the country and thereby cause a serious economic situation. Mr. Thuan also said that the Vietnamese government had already drawn down its foreign exchange reserve by $60 million.

The President then asked whom Secretary Thuan would see during his visit in Washington and particularly suggested that he see some Republican Senators, notably Dirksen and Hickenlooper, as he felt this might be useful in the extremely difficult struggle which would be involved in obtaining the funds requested by President Diem.

The President also said that we should continue to increase the size of our MAAG in order to handle speedily the training of the Vietnamese troops and that this increase should be done quietly without publicly indicating that we did not intend to abide by the Geneva Accords.

70. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, June 14, 1961

1876. Task Force VN 6. Reference Department telegrams 1429 and 1475. [2]

1. I have sent letter to British Charge Stewart proposing following fields of possible British assistance to GVN subject of course to mutual GVN-UK agreement and in coordination with appropriate US agencies (full text of letter being pouched [3]).

Administration—a) Advice and assistance in administrative techniques, particularly re operations Ministry Interior, coordination of activities at local level and training civil servants for work in countryside in close contact with people, b) Studies of methods of government administration in face Communist subversion through Vietnamese visits to Malaya and attendance at British schools, and visits of British personnel to Viet-Nam, c) Support of GVN programs related to Montagnard population in order reduce Viet Cong infiltration in mountain regions.

Police and Security—Training courses in Viet-Nam or elsewhere for members Sûrete, appropriate judicial elements of Civil Guard and border control and immigration elements of Ministry of Interior, in protection of government leaders and facilities, and techniques of population control, identification, investigation and interrogation.

Information and Propaganda—Advice and training in techniques of information and propaganda, and actual production of such material for dissemination in both South and North Viet Nam.

Intelligence—Assistance to new central intelligence organization in training of personnel and in developing techniques of centralizing and coordinating results obtained from GVN intelligence activities. Letter emphasizes that at outset CIO operation necessary avoid strengthening certain GVN elements seeking compete with it and importance close coordination between US and British effort to avoid conflicting advice.

Military—Aside from use of such facilities as jungle warfare school in Malaya, letter suggests that military not a field of particu-

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/6-1461. Secret. Also sent to CINCPAC for PolAd and repeated to London and Kuala Lumpur.

[2] Dated May 22 and 30, respectively. The former reported that the British were anxious to inquire of Diem what kind of assistance they might provide. (*Ibid.*, 751K.5-MSP/5-1361) The latter stated that the British offered to send to Vietnam officers with counterinsurgency experience who were serving in Malaya. (*Ibid.*, 751K.5-MSP/5-2661)

[3] Transmitted as an enclosure to despatch 579 from Saigon, June 16. (*Ibid.*, 641.51K/6-661)

lar British assistance to GVN at this time and explains that MAAG has drawn on Malayan end other anti-guerrilla experience in developing doctrine for Viet-Nam.

Material and Equipment—Contributions of material and equipment welcome particularly in fields proposed for British assistance, but with detailed prior coordination with US agencies to assure adequate logistical preparations.

Medical and Other Units—Assignment of mobile medical teams to assist in caring for battle casualties and similar teams in fields social services, preventive medicine, etc. This particularly important in view shortage of doctors in SVN.

Pilot Area—Selection of pilot area, e.g. one pro vince, for multi-pronged projects designed reduce insurgency and strengthen GVN and permitting development and testing of techniques which could later be given wider application.

Advisors or Advisory Group—Increase of present number British advisors working in Viet-Nam and possible establishment of assistance or advisory group working under single supervision and control.

2. Stewart informed DCM he very pleased with our response as set forth in letter and particularly impressed with suggestions re pilot area and medical and other teams.

We shall push forward with British here on above proposals.[1]

Nolting

[1] Stewart replied in a preliminary letter of thanks on June 15, and on June 26 wrote further that the British were studying the proposals but agreed that any effort must be fully coordinated. He added that they hoped to be able to send R.G.K. Thompson, a former Defense Secretary in the Federation of Malaya, to head a small advisory group in Vietnam. (Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files, FRC 66 A 878, 350 GVN TF)

71. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, June 16, 1961—8:25 p.m.

1534. Task Force VN 11. Joint State/ICA. Refs (A) Embtel 1874, (B) Embtel 1863. [2]

In conversations at highest level Thuan has repeated statement reported Ref B that induction 20,000 being deferred because GVN "simply does not have the liquid assets necessary to pay the local costs of continuing this increase to 170,000". In view urgency avoid delays in mobilization plans, problem received high level review Washington with following conclusions:

A. Issue concerns how total CY 1961 GVN budget costs can be financed by joint US/GVN actions. Military budget represents critical aspect but should not be resolved except in total context.

B. Additional US dollar aid not justified on economic grounds in light GVN reserve position.

C. Analysis info Ref A indicates there is now available for commitment from combined US/GVN sources total of 6,066 million piasters (5,366 million US and 700 million GVN) against estimated total military budget requirement including additional 20,000 men of 6,579 million piasters. This represents approximately 94% of total required or on monthly basis about eleven months of CY 1961 requirements for commitment. US commitment alone to date represents 80% of total or about ten months requirement. Do not therefore see any financial reason for GVN suspend mobilization plans at this time.

D. Recognize, however, that by suspending mobilization on grounds lack of assured budgetary financing, GVN has created politico/military rather than economic issue and is attempting place onus for slow-down on US. In order resolve this political issue, you authorized negotiate agreement with GVN to resume mobilization within one of following positions, set out in order preference from US point of view:

1. US willing now commit to 1961 MBS additional 178.5 million piasters ($5.1 million equivalent) available from US controlled sources (Ref B) provided GVN (a) proceeds without delay with mobilization effort and undertakes major effort meet balance 1961 military budget requirements from own resources. SFG arriving

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/6-1461. Secret; Niact. Drafted by Cottrell, Fowler, and Furst (ICA); cleared with McConaughy and ICA; and signed for the Secretary by Cottrell. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Telegram 1874, June 14, reviewed various aspects of the Vietnamese military budget. (*Ibid.*, 751K.5-MSP/6-1461) Telegram 1863 is Document 67.

Saigon shortly assist GVN in developing ways and means meeting budgetary requirements (FYI) We unable confirm availability 178.5 million but assume USOM analysis takes account of restriction against commitment US-owned local currency prior to deposit (End FYI)

2. If above insufficient inducement, one of following additional concessions could be offered. MBS of $153.3 equivalent assumes FY 1961 non-project aid level of $110 million of which $97.4 million allotted to date, leaving balance $12.6 million. Since GVN requirement is not for foreign exchange, but for local currency, piasters needed to pay for 20,000 man increase could be raised by charging Vietnamese importers same rate (i.e. 73.5 to 1) for balance of FY 61 non-project assistance as GVN charges importers for most of its own exchange. Customs and other taxes would be additive as with GVN financed imports. This rate would raise at least additional 485 million piasters which when added to commitment of 178.5 million piasters current availability per 1 above more than sufficient cover remaining gap 1961 military budget.

3. Final alternative would be to increase FY 1961 dollar aid level by $4.55 million with agreement these dollars would generate piasters at 73.5 1 rate as per (2) above and thus generate 334.5 million piasters which, together with 178.5 million under (1) above would cover remaining requirements CY 1961 military budget.

In discussions with GVN on resolution current problem you should also point out that (a) inflationary pressures resulting from drawdown of existing local currency pipeline or from increase GVN foreign exchange reserves much the same as those resulting from budget deficit and (b) that additional dollars provided by US would go either reserves or finance non-essential goods. After careful US examination resulting in considerations outlined above GVN would appear unduly concerned that if it pays local currency costs 20,000 man increase, serious inflationary pressure would result.

Rusk

72. Editorial Note

In a letter to Diem, May 8 (see Document 48), President Kennedy offered to send a special group of economic and fiscal experts to Vietnam to work out a financial plan on which to base United States-Vietnamese joint efforts. Following Diem's agreement to this proposal, the Department of State began to look for a prominent American economist to head the mission. Personal commitments prevented Neil Jacoby, Head of the UCLA Business School, from taking on the assignment, and Eugene A. Staley, Research Director of the Stanford Research Institute, subsequently accepted the appointment. Colonel Black, William Diehl (Department of the Treasury), Paul Geren and Warren Green (Department of State), and Hermen Kleine (ICA) completed the group.

On June 1, the Embassy in Saigon transmitted the terms of reference for the group.

"Purpose of Special Financial Group (SFG) is to provide expert economic and financial advice to assist Ambassador in reaching agreement with GVN on a financial plan, based on appraisal of present resources that may be available to the GVN including contributions from abroad. Plan should be designed to use resources to finance

"1) appropriate level—military and security forces.

"2) continuing social programs now underway, and their expansions where necessary.

"3) continuing economic development." (Telegram 1828, Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/6-161)

Staley had "a rather thorough initial discussion on Saturday afternoon [May 27] with Sterling Cottrell" (Staley letter to Bowles, May 29, Yale University, Bowles Papers, Box 292, Folder 0421 Staley). The Staley Group held its first meeting on May 31 and met again on June 5. Two days later Staley discussed Vietnam with Lansdale. On June 14, he talked with senior Defense Department officials, and on the following day, with Vice President Johnson before departing for Saigon on June 16. Staley's shorthand notes on the conversations with Lansdale and the Vice President and his appointment book showing the schedule of meetings are in his personal papers. No records of the other discussions have been found.

73. Memorandum From the Secretary of Defense's Assistant for Special Operations (Lansdale) to the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Gilpatric)[1]

Washington, June 26, 1961

SUBJECT

Special Financial Group (SFG) to Vietnam

The first report from Colonel Ed Black on the progress of the SFG has just been received by me. It touches on contention between Defense and ICA, about which Cottrell is aware already. I am passing copies of this memorandum to the Defense members of the Vietnam Task Force for their information and to pass to Cottrell. Colonel Black's report follows:

"1. First week devoted primarily to USOM briefings. Spent first afternoon with Ambassador and Country Team and one morning with MAAG. Administrative and other arrangements for our group are handled by Gardiner (USOM).

"2. Brief initial meeting with the Vietnamese occurred 23 June, followed by an hour and half ARVN briefing given personally by Gen. Khanh. President Diem has arranged four-day trip for US and VN groups 24–27 June. Will visit Ban Me Thuot, Nha Trang, Hue, Tourane and villages in vicinity of each stop. First real opportunity to mix with the Vietnamese group occurred at stag dinner 23 June. Thuan returned Saigon 23 June and obviously VN are stalling until he reports to Diem on Washington trip.

"3. Staley has right philosophy and instincts. Have stressed over-riding importance of understanding VN point of view so as to establish true communication between U.S. and Vietnamese groups. Staley agrees and has established good rapport with Thuc (Vu Quoc Thuc, Dean of the Law School, University of Saigon, whom President Diem appointed to head the Vietnamese economic group to work with Staley). Staley is determined to remove any economic obstacles to prompt solution of security problem which he considers must receive first priority. Within U.S. group Defense and State support Staley's humanistic approach, whereas Treasury and ICA press for hard negotiation to make the Vietnamese bear larger share financial burden.

"4. Have urged Staley to hold joint press conference with Thuc for purpose of making following points to VN and world press:

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 71 A 6489, Viet 091, Secret. Copies also sent to McNamara, Heinz, and Levy. The source text bears the stamped notation "(SecDef has seen)."

"a. Staley group one of a series of follow-up actions stemming from Vice President's trip.

"b. Staley–Thuc have agreed to a completely joint study and have merged their groups for this purpose.

"c. One of first things Joint US–VN Group did was make trip together to see situation at village level.

"d. Solution of security problem prerequisite of any successful program of economic development.

"e. Joint group will develop emergency economic program to provide immediate support to military operations at village level.

"f. Confident that Vietnam will win battle against Communists, the joint group is also preparing 3–5 year outline plan for economic and social development.

"Ambassador has now concurred and USIS is arranging press conference after we return to Saigon.

"5. Staley proposes four-part joint US–VN report which he and Thuc would submit to their respective Presidents as follows:

"Part 1. Military-security problem and financial measures required by both governments to insure its rapid and successful solution.

"Part 2. Emergency program of economic development designed to provide immediate support to military effort.

"Part 3. Outline of a 3–5 year economic development program with priorities of effort indicated.

"Part 4. Recommendations as to method and joint organization for implementation of over-all program.

"6. Appears to me that unless pressure is brought upon Treasury, ICA and State in Washington to take more liberal view of U.S. piaster support for initial 20,000-man increase priceless weeks will be lost and success of Staley mission may be jeopardized. Important to understand Ambassador is handling this particular negotiation entirely separately from Special Financial Group's effort. Obviously if Vietnamese get impression that U.S. is unwilling to take generous view of financing first 20,000-man increment, Staley will find it difficult to convince them we are sincerely trying to help save Vietnam from Communism. Somehow ICA and Treasury in Washington must be made to understand that the Vietnamese consider they should receive some credit on fiscal balance sheet for Vietnamese casualties in daily fight against Viet Cong. Help is urgently needed at Washington end as positions are frozen here. MAAG, favoring liberal approach and USOM with hard nosed position provide little prospect for any meeting of the minds within country team."

74. Telegram From the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Felt), to the Joint Chiefs of Staff[1]

Honolulu, June 26, 1961—12:34 p.m.

2622342 Navy message

1. I would like to offer some tangible evidence of aid programs which have kept a free nation out of the Communist orbit. The following illustrates the vital requirement for military assistance in the preservation of internal security of countries currently under attack from within by the Communists.

2. At the end of the Indo-China war, South Vietnam was politically, economically and militarily weak and a ripe target for Communist expansion. High level analysts concluded that unless the South Vietnamese showed an inclination to make individual and collective sacrifices, which they had not made as of that time, no amount of external assistance could long delay complete Communist victory in So. Vietnam. As a point of fact, after the passage of seven years, the Communists have not been successful in taking over So. Vietnam. I would suggest that there are three reasons why they have not been successful.

a. Substantial US military and economic aid.
b. Pres Ngo Dinh Diem's determined leadership and successes.
c. Communist strategy and tactics.

3. The internal problems facing Diem in 1954 ranged from nearly complete demoralization of the nation in general and the armed forces in particular, to seemingly inevitable unification with North Vietnam which would have resulted in Communist domination over all of Vietnam. However, in the late spring of 1955, Diem managed to work a minor miracle by standing up against the sects—the Binh Xuyen, Hoa Hao, and Cao Dai—contrary to recommendations of his key advisers. He had been urged to accommodate with these groups, allowing them concessions and a continuation of their essentially feudalistic privileges in exchange for their tolerance of his govt and avoidance of deals with the Viet Cong. Diem's moralistic stand on this issue won him wide support among Vietnamese intellectuals and attentistes and also favorably affected international opinion.

4. Diem's successes in this period were due in great part to the steadfast support he received across the board from the US—political, economic and military. It was the success of the Vietnamese

[1] Source: Department of State, G/PM Files: Lot 64 D 354, Top Secret; Priority. Repeated to the Departments of State and Defense and three military installations. The copy printed here is the one sent to the Department of State.

Army against the Binh Xuyen in Apr–May 1955 that gave the other dissident groups pause for thought, made the Communists realize that So. Vietnam was ready to fight for her freedom and provided the loyal So. Vietnamese with a renewed confidence in the govt's ability to provide for their security.

5. When the Jul 1956 unification deadline approached, Diem again displayed wise leadership. Despite remonstrances from the French and others, he circumvented the issue by the simple device of maintaining that the French, not the Vietnamese, had made the commitment and that Vietnam would not be bound thereby. Diem was able to take this strong stand solely by virtue of his growing power assets, the most conspicuous element of which was his armed forces in being, by this time solely supported by the US. It can be hypothesized that Diem's ability to circumvent an undoubtedly disastrous unification in 1956 was possible only because of US support—military and otherwise—of So. Vietnam.

6. By Jul 1957, the Communists' passive and political efforts had been frustrated by Diem's action, and the Viet Cong concluded that a change in strategy was necessary. The Viet Cong strength in armed personnel at this time was about 2000. Their new objective was to create a lack of confidence in the ability of Diem's govt to guarantee security. A reign of terror was substituted for peaceful penetration, acts of terrorism were started against local govt officials and the peasantry, murders and abductions were an integral part of this strategy of terror. Fortunately, this change of tactic did not take place until after Diem had achieved a considerable degree of military and political stability. Further, economic reforms introduced by Diem gave him increased support from the populace. This stability provided Diem a base from which he could fight the Communists. Without military and economic assistance, the development of this base would not have been possible.

7. Pres Diem, supported by increased US military and economic aid, acted to counter these increased Communist activities. In Nov 1957, the 1st Observation Group of the ARVN Special Forces was activated. The number of ARVN personnel undergoing special forces training was increased. A full-time special forces qualified US adviser was assigned to the MAAG, and the ARVN increased and expanded their psywar and civic action programs.

8. The Communists continued their propaganda and acts of terrorism, and during 1958 began successfully to infiltrate the remaining dissident element of the sects. This campaign produced results. By the spring of 1959, the Viet Cong strength was estimated at 3500, and the hostile acts had increased.

9. In early 1960, US personnel in Saigon obtained detailed information of a Viet Cong master plan which called for the Com-

munist take-over of So. Vietnam during 1960. Communist activities during the past eighteen months confirm that their goal is domination of So. Vietnam. Also, during the past eighteen months, the Vietnamese have demonstrated a willingness to make individual and collective sacrifices, i.e.:

a. The results of the 1961 presidential election reflected to a considerable degree the confidence of the Vietnamese in Diem's govt in spite of the fact that many of his anti-Communist programs required great sacrifices on the part of a majority of his populace.

b. In the first months of 1961, the Civil Guard and self defense units have displayed an increased level of aggressiveness in many small operations against the Viet Cong. This increase in operational efficiency and attitude can be directly attributed to US military support and assistance now provided to these units since their reorganization under the Ministry of Defense.

c. Again, as a tangible result of US military advisory efforts and assistance, the regular units of the ARVN have initiated in 1961 more attacks against the Viet Cong than those taken against them by the Viet Cong. This initiative has resulted in a larger number of Viet Cong reported killed and has definitely bolstered ARVN morale and capability.

10. It is clear that the Communists view the attainment of control of SVN with deadly seriousness. In their eyes, they are only delayed in obtaining what they presume to be theirs as the spoils of the Indo-China war. The only real block to a Communist take-over in SVN today is the combination of Diem's strong leadership and the increased capability of SVN armed forces. It is this combination which we must continue to support. While the Communists have not accomplished their goal in So. Vietnam, neither have they been beaten, nor have they desisted. In fact, the new threat occasioned by Communist successes in Laos has produced the most crucial period in S. Vietnam's short history.

11. A predominantly Communist-controlled Laos would vitally threaten So. Vietnam's independence, would greatly extend the Communist frontiers with So. Vietnam, would bring substantially greater Communist military power to bear on the crucial Saigon defense complex, and would facilitate Communist infiltration and subversion.

12. The pattern of Communist activities in SE Asia is clear. Laos is a stepping stone on the Communist road to So. Vietnam. It is now evident that the Communists plan to split Laos from north to south in order to give them better access to So. Vietnam. The key terrain in current Communist operations is that part of southern Laos which is contiguous to So. Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand.

13. Other authorities and Task Force Vietnam may be able to use the foregoing.

75. Editorial Note

On June 26, President Kennedy sent a letter to his Military Representative, General Maxwell Taylor, outlining the functions that he was to undertake in his new position. With regard to Vietnam, the President wrote:

"Review the planning on Vietnam and give me your comments thereon along with your views on how to respond to President Diem's request for a 100,000 man increase in his army."

The President concluded that Taylor would want to confer with the officials responsible for critical areas such as Southeast Asia in formulating his response. (Washington National Records Center, RG 330, Lansdale Files: FRC 63 A 1803, General Taylor File; attached to a memorandum of transmittal from McGeorge Bundy to Secretary of Defense McNamara, dated June 28)

In his reply, dated June 29, Taylor outlined the following four steps:

"A. Dispatch an interim reply to Diem at once.

"B. Consider an additional 30,000 man increase from 170,000 to 200,000 but withhold a decision until the report of the Special Financial Group.

"C. Query the Chief, MAAG, as to the possibility of reducing the time required for inducting and training the new levies—the rate seems too slow to me.

"D. Obtain recommendation of the Ambassador, Chief MAAG, CINCPAC and Defense as to the ultimate goal to be set for the Vietnam Army." (Memorandum for the President, Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Files)

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76. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State[1]

Saigon, June 28, 1961—noon

1945. Task Force VN 11. References: A. Deptel 1534, B. Icato 1904.[2] I had full discussion with Thuan June 26 regarding financing 20,000 army increase for 1961. I told him (para b–1 reftel A) that I

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/6-2861. Secret; Priority. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd. Received at 3:17 a.m., June 28.

[2] Telegram 1534 is Document 71. Icato 1904 has not been found.

was now authorized to make available 178.5 million piasters from US-controlled sources provided GVN continues mobilization at full speed and on understanding that balance of 1961 military budget would be met from GVN resources. Thuan said that this offer had already been made when he was in Washington, that he had said then that GVN was unable to fill remaining gap, but that nevertheless GVN had moved ahead on mobilization as he had agreed to do in Washington. He said that he had upon his return again looked into GVN's budgetary situation and had found the cupboard bare, it was for this reason that they had been forced to cancel the international fair. While he had in good faith given me impression before his departure to Washington that problem might be solved by roughly 50–50 split of additional costs (i.e., by use $5.1 million equivalent plus GVN funds), it was now unfortunately true that GVN could not make up the difference nor any part thereof. They simply did not have the funds, he said. I told him that neither I nor my government wanted to take advantage of the fact that GVN was moving ahead on mobilization, nor did we wish to put squeeze on other essential programs required to win battle in Viet-Nam. However, the only available funds were those mentioned. Thuan said that this left him in an extremely exposed position, that the possibility of an increase in aid (amount unspecified) had been mentioned in Washington, and that he had confirmed that GVN would not put up additional funds.

In studying instructions beforehand, I had decided, after talking with Staley, that it would be unwise to use positions B–2 and B–3 because of their exchange rate feature, which would be prejudicial to SFG's work and predictably unacceptable at this stage to GVN. Nevertheless, I did try out alternative 2, i.e., conversion of $12.6 million balance at VN $73.5 to US $1, plus customs and taxes. Thuan said he would not be able to close the gap on this basis, that he hoped the SFG could work out some arrangement for future financing which would give a more realistic piaster yield for imports and would be acceptable to GVN, but he simply could not prejudge that issue in context of this problem. If he did, he said, he could not get it approved.

During discussion Thuan showed me, as evidence GVN's good faith, a chart of proposed tax increases for 1962 to be presented to the national assembly. Unable to agree, we left it that we would meet again on problem in a couple of days.

I did not use alternative 3.

As Thuan apparently expects additional dollar aid based on conversations in Washington, and it is not yet timely to discuss higher rates of conversion (changes in rates cannot be broached now without prejudicing SFG studies) believe advisable proffer additional

aid now. Can be done if USOM receives immediate allotments. USOM proposes pay entire amount for industrial equipment.

Following is proposed negotiating line for which prompt approval requested.

Estimated 500,000,000 piasters required meet ARVN expansion balance 1961. (This estimate may prove to be high in light rate of induction and other factors undetermined at this time. If so, can be adjusted in 1962 aid figures. But optimum induction should be provided for at this time.) Can meet 200,000,000 piasters from remaining unprogrammed counterpart. Remaining 300,000,000 can be generated by present rate 35 plus 8 customs duties plus production taxes say 7 piasters, by allotment $6,000,000.

Therefore propose proceed pay 12.6 million final 1961 allotment on usual terms (which must do by June 30 to prevent lapse funds) and provide additional $6 million for above-specified purposes.

Foregoing will not prejudice SFG operations (although SFG will doubtless take $6 million into account) but would be proffered to GVN without prejudice to basis of future calculations of appropriate aid levels.

Please advise soonest, as this matter needs to be cleared up promptly if momentum and confidence to be maintained.

Nolting

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77. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, June 28, 1961—8.19 p.m.

1591. Task Force VN 11. Joint State/ICA. Embtel 1945.[2] Department and ICA have agreed release $4.5 million FY 1961 (see separate ICA message[3]) on basis Ambassador's strong recommendation as political demonstration of full U.S. support at time when Lao situation poses most grave military and psychological threat to GVN. No further funds available FY 1961; prepared review need additional aid in connection FY 1962 program.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5–MSP/6–2861. Secret; Niact. Drafted by Wood and Furst (ICA) and cleared with Heinz, Cottrell, B/FAC, FE, and ICA. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] *Supra.*

[3] Not further identified.

In making this decision Washington agencies have taken into consideration fact that no economic justification for this additional aid at this time. Have also considered whether grant of additional assistance might be misinterpreted by GVN as evidence U.S. no longer pressing economic reforms which would enable GVN meet internal financing problem without additional external aid urged by U.S. in past. Believe danger such misinterpretation considerable, but hopeful problem can be contained through subsequent effort Staley group, Brookings team and through Country team pressure, as appropriate to persuade GVN adopt needed reforms.

Agree that U.S.–GVN good will and mutual cooperation achieved by Vice President's visit and clear public indications that our backing of Viet-Nam is among highest objectives U.S. foreign policy should not now be weakened by further debate with GVN over question financing 20,000 man increase. To obtain maximum political benefit we prepared approve immediately balance of remaining FY 61 funds, $4.5 million. Also agree it would damage U.S.–GVN relations if GVN obtained impression, however erroneous, we were holding back our support to take advantage of fact they committed to mobilization.

Making these funds available to GVN should not only maintain momentum GVN mobilization and defense effort, but also put U.S. in stronger position to negotiate with GVN on problem sharing cost burden between U.S. and GVN. We will have responded generously to GVN request. Mobilization to 170,000 will be going on into early CY 1962. In this situation and when findings Dr. Staley's SFG are received there will be time examine mutual cost problem in calmer atmosphere and with more facts available.

In informing GVN funds available you should make clear we have made crash effort to meet request in view their good faith in starting mobilization and due to grave situation in SEA. In return we would welcome official GVN assurance that they will make extraordinary effort solve their financial problems by means available to them. We shall look forward later to full discussion mutual financial problems including aid levels.

FYI. Although no recent mention level GVN contributions to military budget, assume that 700 million piasters remains floor for 1961. End FYI. [4]

Rusk

[4] Nolting informed Thuan of the substance of this telegram on June 29 and Thuan responded that he was authorized to say that he could put up 50 million piasters to help finance the additional 20,000 troops. Nolting reported that the U.S. concession had a salutary effect and believed it would enable the Staley Group to reach a more satisfactory understanding than would otherwise have been possible. (Telegram 1955 from Saigon, June 29. Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/6-2961)

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78. Memorandum From the Secretary of Defense's Assistant for Special Operations (Lansdale) to the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Gilpatric) [1]

Washington, June 30, 1961

SUBJECT

Vietnam Economic Report

Colonel Ed Black has sent me the following information about the joint report by the Vietnamese government and the U.S. Special Financial Group headed by Dr. Staley. I will send him comments as he requested, [2] including suggestions I have given to the U.S. Army Civil Affairs team which departs tomorrow for Vietnam. Colonel Black's message:

"Following is my outline of joint U.S.-VN economic report which was adopted by Staley-Thuc groups 28 June.

"1. Introduction.

A. How report came to be written. Outgrowth of Johnson visit.
B. General philosophy adopted by the two chairmen. (See Joint Press Release [2]).

"2. Military—Internal Security Program:

A. Brief résumé of security situation, taking into account (1) the stepped-up level of VC activity and (2) the potential effects of events in Laos on the GVN security problem.

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 71 A 6489, Viet 091. Secret. Signed "Ed". Copies also sent to McNamara, Heinz, and Levy.
[2] Not found.

B. The general defense concept of the GVN.
C. The ARVN.
D. The civil guard.
E. The local defense forces.
F. The youth corps.

"3. Emergency economic program:

A list of programs designed to insure the success of the military-internal security program by providing immediate, impact-type economic and social aid to the villagers and other important groups.

"4. Medium range development program:

The broad guidelines of a 3–5 year program designed to make Vietnam a self-sustaining economy.

"5. Financial recommendations:

Recommendations as to the financial and other measures to be taken by each government in support of the three essential programs outlined above.

"6. Organizational recommendations.

Specific recommendations concerning the establishment of procedures to assure continuing joint GVN–U.S. refinement of the plans and supervision of the implementation of the three essential programs outlined above.

"I am working directly with Gen. Khanh and MAAG on sections 2, 3 and 6. Under section 3, the Vietnamese have proposed the following with first priority to A and B:

A. Communications at village level including wire, radio, and community.
B. More agrovilles.
C. Flying doctor program.
D. Free distribution of insecticides and fertilizers.
E. Widespread program of rubber planting on small holdings on basis of 3 hectares per family.

"Wolf Ladejinsky (advisor to President Diem on agrarian affairs) also places village communications in highest priority. Would appreciate your suggestions for section 3.

"Under section 6 we are looking for recommendations as to desirable joint U.S.–VN agencies which would bring U.S. and VN opposite numbers into continuing personal contact, thus improving understanding and trust in dealing with daily problems. As examples, we are considering desirability of joint committee on rural reconstruction along lines of Taiwan experience. Also joint U.S.–VN defense board patterned after similar organizations in Philippines and Japan. Would appreciate your views."

79. Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, Washington, June 30, 1961 [1]

SUBJECT

Viet-Nam and Laos

PARTICIPANTS

Mr. D. N. Chatterjee, Charge d'Affaires a.i., Indian Embassy
Mr. Walter P. McConaughy, Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs
Mr. Rogers B. Morgan, Officer in Charge, Indian Affairs
Mr. Thomas W. Ainsworth, Acting Officer in Charge, Viet-Nam Affairs

Mr. Chatterjee called at Mr. McConaughy's request to discuss the situation in the Indochina area.[2] Mr. McConaughy opened the conversation by remarking that the Department had been very busy recently with questions concerning Laos. General Phoumi, who was still here on his current visit, seemed to have decided to proceed further with the necessary steps looking to the attainment of a situation of guaranteed neutrality for Laos. The developments in Laos had required us to look carefully at the situation in all of Indochina. In particular the relationship to the situation in Viet-Nam was very close. Events in Viet-Nam and particularly the Communist guerrilla activities and infiltration of agents from the North had created a very grave problem which in our view clearly involved violations of the Geneva Agreements by the Communist side. In this connection we had reached a decision recently, because of the Communist violations and their stepping up of infiltration and subversion, that it was necessary to increase the strength of MAAG Viet-Nam by about 100. This was done solely because the Communist violations made a step-up of training GVN forces necessary. Our action did not mean that we did not respect the Geneva Agreements of 1954 or that we intended to push aside any part of these Agreements, even Articles 16 and 17. It was necessary, however, to have a freer hand to cope with the violations by the Communist side. The addition of the 100 personnel did not increase the strength of MAAG to the point where it would become a public issue. It might be necessary, however, to go higher in the future. This would involve only the minimum number necessary. We hoped

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/6-3061. Secret. Drafted by Ainsworth and initialed by McConaughy.

[2] On June 13, Cottrell informed McConaughy that the British, French, Canadians, and the U.S. Embassy in India all believed that the time had come to inform the Indian Government about the increase in the MAAG in Vietnam. (Memorandum, June 13, Department of State, Vietnam Working Group Files: Lot 66 D 193, 3-D GVN, ICC, April–June 1961) On the memorandum McConaughy wrote: "Pls make appt with Indian Embassy."

that such an increase would not be necessary but that would depend on what the Communists did. We felt it most important to inform the Indian Government of this decision and our view of the situation because of the extremely important role India has played and is playing with regard to affairs in the Southeast Asia area. This included India's part in the present conference concerning Laos as well as in the earlier Geneva Conference and in the International Commission.

Mr. Chatterjee thanked Mr. McConaughy for the information and commented that presumably the additional 100 personnel, or whatever the MAAG might amount to in numbers, merely indicated a stepping-up of the training effort and not that the American personnel would don uniforms and fight. Mr. McConaughy replied that Mr. Chatterjee's interpretation was completely correct. There was no intention at all of having the Americans take over the fighting.

Mr. Chatterjee continued that he had asked this because of the reports concerning Laos where it was said that American officers had been sent directly to the front with the local forces. He wished to raise one other point. Because of the possibility of escalation he wondered whether the US intended to "hit North Viet-Nam in kind." When he talked recently with Mr. Rostow,[1] the latter had been much exercised over the situation where cadres, potential leaders in South Viet-Nam, were being wiped out by the Communist action and had indicated that he felt it essential to take stronger countermeasures against the source of the problem. Certain press reports had also suggested that we might be thinking of retaliation in kind against North Viet-Nam.

Mr. McConaughy said that of course he could not answer for all contingencies in the future, but the assignment of this group of 100 personnel to MAAG had no relation to such a change of policy. They were intended to improve the training of the Vietnamese forces for counterguerrilla action. While we have to preserve our freedom of action as regards possible contingencies, there was no plan to take action at this time of the sort Mr. Chatterjee had inquired about and this increase was not related to any action of that kind.

Mr. Chatterjee remarked that after his talk with Mr. Rostow, he had informed the Ministry of External Affairs. He expected to be seeing Mr. Rostow again on this subject. One of Mr. Rostow's main complaints was that the ICC was not really fulfilling its functions by investigating all complaints of violations. He felt he should point out two matters in this regard. First, the American attitude was based on

[1] No record of this conversation has been found.

the view that whenever a complaint against North Viet-Nam was filed, the North Vietnamese objected and this blocked any action by the ICC. Information he had received from India confirmed that North Viet-Nam had done this but that South Viet-Nam had actually done it on more occasions. He did not have complete information but believed that the Ministry might be assembling it.

Mr. McConaughy asked Mr. Ainsworth whether our information confirmed this. Mr. Ainsworth said that we had had reports that the Vietnamese Government had on several occasions objected to proposals for ICC investigations within its territory, but suggested that there seemed to be a considerable difference between the substance of the proposed investigations in complaints filed against the GVN and those filed against the Communist side. The GVN took the view that not being a signatory to the Geneva Agreements, its cooperation with the ICC was a voluntary act on its part.

Mr. Chatterjee said that the second of his points was that the Indian Government had now told the Indian Chairman of the ICC (in fact long before his conversation with Mr. Rostow) that the ICC must investigate complaints and that obstacles by either government were no excuse for inaction. Mr. Chatterjee had asked the Ministry for further details. Mr. Desai plans to get in touch with Ambassador Galbraith to discuss these questions at length. The problem was not that the Indians ignored complaints but that the Poles in particular made things extremely difficult and in fact the Canadians were also difficult on some occasions. When the Poles and Canadians each took a rigid position on a subject, Gopala Menon and some others had tended to take a middle position regardless of the merits of the issue. India hoped to correct this tendency but it would be difficult if both sides continued to take inflexible polar positions. He hoped that if the Indians' attitude had appeared negative before, it would be more positive now. Mr. Desai's attitude should be a great help in this respect. As for MAAG, it is a fact that it exists. A quantitative augmentation in MAAG was one thing, but a qualitative change such as would be involved in a significant alteration of its functions was quite another and would be likely to give an excuse for the neighbor to the North to come in. One may overestimate the Chinese Communists either as to their capabilities or as to their inclinations to embark on aggressive adventures, or both, but on our side we must be careful not to give them unwarranted excuses for such action. It seems that the military sometimes are likely to take the bit in their teeth and run. A partisan war (of which Mr. Chatterjee said he had had some experience in the sense of having spent some time in the jungle on the CBI front in World War II) presents special problems and this is often likely to lead to a situation where the obvious military solution appears to be attacking

the home base of enemy forces as was the case in Kashmir and in Korea.

Mr. McConaughy observed that with us the military would not make the fundamental decisions on such questions by themselves. Even in the case at hand of the MAAG increase, care had been exercised that the number which was traditionally regarded as the MAAG ceiling was not exceeded. We shall take the minimum action necessary to deal with the problems we face.

[Here follow three paragraphs on the situation in Laos.]

Mr. McConaughy said that he desired to clarify his earlier reference to a MAAG "ceiling". The MAAG strength was not now over what had traditionally and unofficially been regarded as the MAAG "ceiling" but we could not tie our hands. Mr. Ainsworth observed that according to our understanding the most recent ICC communication on the subject of MAAG (which had been a letter to the Vietnamese Government) had not said anything about a specific numerical "ceiling" for MAAG. Consequently when we mentioned a MAAG ceiling we were simply speaking in general terms and did not mean to imply that we felt that a specific figure had been set in this respect.

Mr. Chatterjee replied that the numbers of the MAAG were less important than its quality and the role it played. There was also the matter of one's over-all assessment of the situation. Mr. Krapf, the German Minister in Washington, had recently remarked that the Russian national game was chess, the American national game was baseball. This might have some significance in terms of the difference in habits between rapid reflex action and long range planning. It was often hard to tell which move on a chess board was really the significant one. At the present time, to return to the baseball metaphor, there appeared to be quite a number of balls flying about, what with Laos, Berlin, etc. Walter Lippman had also stressed that one should never get held or committed by a move in one part of the map. As for the Chinese, his (Chatterjee's) view was that they generally play in their own court unless they think they can get a quick victory. Thus they had moved into Ladakh which was easy but would be most unlikely to move seriously against India proper. Concerning Viet-Nam, the Chinese would weigh the factors carefully but any development which would give them an excuse to move in there would be a great temptation. They obviously had strong capabilities in the area and it would give them a chance, which he believed they would welcome, to chasten Ho Chi Minh. It was certainly not desirable to have another Korea. In a MAAG the quantity was less important than quality, it was important not to give the Chinese an excuse. The people of South Viet-Nam, he continued, would be our most valuable ally against the Communists.

Diem was still completely dependent on the US. It would be most helpful if the Vietnamese could display more initiative on their own which would make them a true ally. North Viet-Nam was certainly no attraction to them. It was by all accounts a completely drab area. As regards South Viet-Nam, a combined political and military solution was needed. Mr. McConaughy observed that we also hope that measures would be taken to increase the political incentive for a more active Vietnamese popular participation in the struggle against the Communist subversion. Diem had already taken some steps, which we thought should be useful in this respect.

On the way to the street, Mr. Chatterjee explained to Mr. Horgan that one reason he raised the question of our "hitting North Viet-Nam in kind" was that the Soviet Embassy had conveyed to him the Soviet impression that the US had this intention. He had not mentioned this to Mr. McConaughy because he had not been able to assess the Soviet purpose in telling him this: whether it was merely argumentative, or whether it was a matter of serious concern to the Soviets which they presumed Mr. Chatterjee would convey to the US.

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80. Memorandum From the Deputy Director of the Vietnam Task Force (Wood) to the Director of the Task Force (Cottrell)[1]

Washington, July 1, 1961

SUBJECT

Conversation with Mr. Rostow[2]

Rostow made the following points:

(1) He has reason to believe that within the next three to six months we will need all the documentation we can to show the seriousness of Viet Cong infiltration in Viet-Nam in order to forestall an attempt by Adlai Stevenson to suggest UN intervention in Viet-Nam. He suggested urgently that CIA be required to prepare and keep current a dossier with covering summary memorandum

[1] Source: Department of State, Vietnam Working Group Files: Lot 66 D 193, VN 1961 TF/10 thru 21: Secret.

[2] The date of this conversation has not been determined.

designed to show the intensity, trend and seriousness of Viet Cong infiltration in Viet-Nam. (*Comment*: I concur.)

(2) He referred to the present ARVN sweep in Vinh Binh province and asked pointedly what would be done to insure that after this operation was over the Viet Cong would be kept out of Vinh Binh province. Did the ARVN have plans and capabilities of keeping the area clean after the sweep was over. I pointed out that Vinh Binh province was between two rivers and the sea but said that I had no information as to future plans for keeping the province sterile.

I said that in general terms we regretted that there was no plan based on the geography of Viet-Nam for sweeping the country clean, and pointed out that Thompson had made a report to the Vietnamese government in April 1960[3] suggesting the framing operations which had succeeded in Malaya. I said that you and I had discussed this and were in agreement that such framing operations should start in Saigon which was the ultimate target of the Viet Cong and move northwestward on the road to Phnom Penh up to the Cambodian border and the Tay Ninh salient which was one of the worst bases for Viet Cong operations. Thereafter the framing operation could be extended northeast–southwest along the Cambodian border.

Rostow jumped to his feet and said "This is the first time I have heard a practical suggestion as to how we should carry out our operations in Viet-Nam." He asked that the Task Force prepare a telegram for Saigon inquiring about a plan for operations to push the Viet Cong out of Viet-Nam and said that we should query them about the Thompson plan concept. I agreed to do so.[4]

Later Bob Johnson said that he and Rostow were also concerned as to whether the command structure set up by Diem was really working or whether Diem was still running everything himself in a rather haphazard manner. I pointed out that the counter-insurgency plan enabled us to check from time to time as to whether the Vietnamese were living up to their end of the bargain before we made further commitments and suggested that we put in as two prerequisites to a 200,000 man increase (1) a requirement for an overall strategic plan for ridding Viet-Nam of the VC and (2) assurance that the chain of command concept was really taking root in the GVN.

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[3] No copy of Thompson's report, given to the Vietnamese Government by the British Embassy in Saigon on April 13, 1960, has been found, but a three-page summary of the report, prepared by Wood and dated April 4, is in Department of State, Vietnam Working Group Files: Lot 66 D 193, VN 1961 TF/10 thru 21.

[4] At this point on the source text, the words "on the condition that we did not mention the fact that this idea had originated with the British" are crossed out.

Comment: I don't think this need hold up plans for increasing the 200,000 since the increase will not commence until February 1962.

There is attached a draft telegram along the above lines.[3]

[3] Not found attached to the source text. No such telegram sent to the Embassy in Saigon has been found.

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81. Editorial Note

On July 3, the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam, General Lionel McGarr, delivered to President Diem an aide-memoire reviewing the military situation in Vietnam and presenting recommendations for improvement in the performance of the Vietnamese armed forces. A copy of the aide-memoire is in Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878, 350 Pol Affairs. It is printed in full in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pages 227–238.

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82. Letter From the Acting Secretary of Defense (Gilpatric) to the Secretary of State[1]

Washington, July 3, 1961

DEAR DEAN: The Department of Defense, as directed by National Security Memorandum No. 52,[2] has made an assessment of the military utility of a further increase in South Vietnamese armed forces from 170,000 to 200,000. It is our view that with the present deteriorating situation in Southeast Asia it is in the best interests of the United States to support in principle this increase in the force structure for Vietnam to provide for two divisions or their equivalent (including necessary Naval and Air Force augmentation). With the critical increase of Communist insurgency in South Vietnam, the present military posture of North Vietnam, and the Communist potential resulting from the expansion of Communist controlled

[1] Source: Department of State, S/S–NSC Files: Lot 72 D 316, NSAMs: Top Secret.
[2] Document 52.

areas in Laos, a 30,000-man increase in South Vietnamese forces is justified.

Such an increase, which would require additional MAP and Defense Support type funding, would permit activation of the two additional infantry divisions requested by President Diem in his letter of 9 June 1961 to President Kennedy.[1] Since President Diem envisages an eventual increase of the force level to 270,000, it should be made clear that U.S. approval of the 30,000-man increment would not imply U.S. acceptance of the 270,000 force level.

This increase of 30,000 should not be initiated until the currently authorized increase of 20,000 is properly amalgamated into the GVN force structure. It is our view that the additional increase should proceed only as rapidly as the GVN is capable to receive, support, administer, train, and maintain forces in being as well as to provide for the increase.

Sincerely,

Ros Gilpatric

[1] See footnote 3, Document 69.

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83. Memorandum of a Conversation Between the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (Smith) and the President's Military Aide (Clifton), The White House, Washington, July 3, 1961[1]

General Clifton reported that the President, in approving the text of a letter to be sent to President Diem as an interim reply to Diem's letter of June 9,[2] expressed a desire to know more about the military considerations involved in Diem's request to increase his military forces by an additional 100,000 men.

The President asks that the appropriate officials consider sending to Viet-Nam a qualified military group which would study the Viet-Namese request for additional soldiers. This U.S. group would be able to supply to the President its informed judgment as to whether the U.S. should assist Diem to increase his army by 100,000. In the President's view, the military survey group should be

[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series. Secret.

[2] See footnote 3, Document 69. President Kennedy's reply is *infra*.

in Viet-Nam before the economic group headed by Dr. Staley has completed its study. The President is interested in knowing what share of the cost of equipping and maintaining 100,000 additional men would be borne by the U.S. He noted that the 20,000 increase of Viet-Namese forces was to be jointly financed.

The President commented, in discussing who should undertake the military survey, that it would probably not be possible for General Taylor to go to Viet-Nam at this time.

Bromley

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84. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam[1]

Washington, July 3, 1961—5.27 p.m.

8. Task Force VN. There follows text of a letter from the President to President Diem. In presenting it to President Diem the Ambassador should explain that it is not intended for publication.

"Dear Mr. President:

I have read with care your letters of May 15 and June 9[2] and have discussed with your able representative, Secretary of State Nguyen dinh Thuan,[3] the grave problems which you and your people are facing. Vice President Johnson has told me of the valor of the Vietnamese.

In view of the communist menace in Viet-Nam and of the serious threat posed to your country by the situation in southern Laos, both of which were set forth cogently in your second letter, I am very pleased to learn that the process of increasing the armed forces of Viet-Nam from 150,000 to 170,000 was recommenced recently, before a final understanding on financing had been reached. I am also gratified to know that on June 29 your govern-

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/7-361. Secret; Priority. In telegram 12 to Saigon, July 4, the Department asked the Embassy to insert in the text an additional sentence—the second sentence in the fifth paragraph of text as printed here. (*Ibid.*, 751K.00/7-461) In telegram 18 from Saigon, July 5, the Embassy referred to both telegrams 8 and 12 from the Department and reported that the President's letter was delivered to Thuan that day, but since Diem was unavailable there was no reaction to report. (*Ibid.*, 751K.00/7-561) No copy of the letter delivered on July 5 has been found.

[2] See footnotes 4 and 3, Documents 55 and 69, respectively.

[3] See Document 69.

ment reached agreement with Ambassador Nolting on the joint financing of this increase.[4] Due to the gravity of the situation and to the Vietnamese government's willingness to go ahead with this increase in its armed forces even before the question of joint financing had been settled, we have sought to be as cooperative as possible.

Meanwhile, as the mobilization to 170,000 is continuing, the Department of Defense is urgently studying your request for support in a further long term increase to a 270,000 man force. In addition to exploring the usefulness, methods and procedures of such an increase we will both have to give the most careful attention to the large amount of funds which such an increase will involve for our two countries. I hope that the findings of Dr. Eugene Staley may provide helpful guidelines for both our Governments.

Returning to your letter of June 9 I was gratified to read of the determined and intelligent efforts being made to continue the economic and particularly the educational progress which Viet-Nam has made despite the Communist campaign of violence. Such programs are among the basic developements which will nourish the aspirations of the Vietnamese. I have also noted the new political institutions which were mentioned in your letter. I hope that these institutions and others like them will be strengthened by the participation of the rising generation and that they will have a healthy growth.

As to Cambodia, the communist threat to Southeast Asia would appear to clearly outweigh all other considerations and to necessitate improved relations among the free nations of the area. Would it not be in the interests of your Government to seek accommodation with Cambodia on the questions of improved border control and the settlement of the debts which are outstanding under the Paris Accords? Ambassador Nolting is at your disposition should you wish to discuss the matter further.

In closing I would like to affirm to you in the strongest terms that we support your government's determination to resist communist aggression and to maintain its independence.

We admire the courage and tenacity displayed by the Government and people of Viet-Nam and particularly by their President.

With warm personal regards,

Sincerely,

John F. Kennedy"

Rusk

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[4] See footnote 4, Document 77.

85. Memorandum From the Director of the Vietnam Task Force (Cottrell) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (McConaughy) [1]

Washington, July 8, 1961.

SUBJECT

Viet-Nam

REFERENCE

Memcon dated June 21 between G—U. Alexis Johnson, and Professor Rostow [2]

In the reference conversation Professor Rostow raised certain questions which Ben Wood and I would answer as follows:

Q: *Will not the communists put great heat on Viet-Nam, perhaps timed for a crisis over Berlin?*

Ans: We think this very possible. They might also time the "heat" to coincide with the end of the Geneva Conference on Laos.

Q: *How are Diem's administrative reorganizations progressing? Is he continuing to operate everything from his own desk?*

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Secret. Drafted by Cottrell and Wood. The source text is attached to a typewritten note of July 11 from Robert H. Johnson to Rostow, in which he wrote the text was a "bootleg copy" for Rostow's private information pending receipt of a copy through regular channels. Johnson gave the following appraisal of the memorandum:

"The answers look generally all right to me. I do think that the Soviets would think several times about creating simultaneous crises in Berlin and South Viet Nam. They might have considerable trouble managing two crises at once, particularly in view of the fact that North Vietnam and Communist China have different interests in the Viet Nam situation. Moreover, they would probably worry about our ability to handle two crises simultaneously. They might fear that such a situation would produce a convulsive reaction on our part or other forms of irrational, unpredictable behavior."

[2] Reference is to U. Alexis Johnson's memorandum of his telephone conversation with Rostow on June 21 in which Rostow expressed the view that "we were in a brief interval before great heat might be put on us in Viet Nam, and he wouldn't be surprised if it should come to a head at the time of the Berlin crisis." Rostow also expressed concern about the effectiveness of Diem's administrative proposals and that McGarr's support of these proposals reflected "desperation." Rostow urged that "we should not look just on the surface of the request for 100,000 men, but look beneath it, and should really figure out where we stand and what we do." Rostow suggested that if the President went ahead with his plans to name Maxwell Taylor as his military adviser, Taylor "might go out and take a thorough look on the ground at the military administrative program." Johnson agreed with Rostow's idea that the U.S. Government should prepare for the contingency that the Vietnam question would be raised in the United Nations by assembling evidence and preparing a case. Johnson said that "the material was around but had not been assembled for that particular purpose." (Department of State, Johnson Files, Telephone Conversations)

Ans: Reports indicate that Diem still exercises a tight, personal control but we hope this may be loosened gradually within the framework of the new organizations.

Q: *Diem is now asking for a 100,000 force increase above our agreed 170,000. McGarr's endorsement*[3] *sounds like desperation. In reviewing this request, should we not look beneath the surface and figure out where we stand?*

Ans: The President has informed Diem (Deptel 8 of July 3[4]) that "the Department of Defense is urgently studying your request for support in a further long term increase to a 270,000 man force. In addition to exploring the usefulness, methods and procedures of such an increase we will both have to give the most careful attention to the large amount of funds which such an increase will involve for our two countries. I hope that the findings of Dr. Eugene Staley may provide helpful guidelines for both our Governments."

At the present rate of mobilization the Vietnamese armed forces will not reach 170,000 until February 1962. This gives us time to study further increases. We believe that the following prerequisites to further increases in ARVN should be obtained: (a) assurances from Task Force Saigon after consultation with the GVN that the reforms which have been decreed in Viet-Nam to tighten the chain of command and to unify the intelligence function are actually being implemented, (b) that MAAG and the Vietnamese military work out an overall geographical strategic plan for driving the Viet Cong out of Viet-Nam, (c) agreement with the GVN, after the Staley recommendations are received, on the basis of cost sharing between the U.S. and GVN.

In addition to the above affirmative action on the part of Diem, the question is whether a 270,000 force level makes any sense. The arguments are:

1. In Malaya a force of 400,000 was needed to bring the guerrillas under control. (The guerrillas did not have substantial outside help.) If the Vietnamese armed forces are increased by 100,000 the total size of the security forces including 270,000 ARVN, 68,000 Civil Guard and 50,000 Self Defense Corps will be 388,000. If the Police Force is thrown in the total would be just about 400,000, the same size as was needed in Malaya.

2. In Malaya the job was easier for the following reasons: (a) a narrow isthmus frontier (b) the guerrillas were mostly Chinese and easily identifiable (c) the guerrillas could be starved out more easily because food is much less readily available than it is in Viet-Nam (d) experienced British officers were running the show far more directly than is the case in Viet-Nam where our MAAG still acts in an advisory capacity.

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[3] See Document 66.
[4] Document 84.

3. Given Viet-Nam's long exposed flank adjoining southern Laos, which may soon be an open base for Viet Cong operations against Viet-Nam, it may not be a sin but a necessity to increase the Vietnamese armed forces as rapidly as the Vietnamese military absorptive capacity permits.

4. As the Viet Cong step up operations in SVN, additional troops are necessary to guard villages, etc. The step-up may be greatly accelerated in the near future—too soon to train and field the additional 100,000—but the requirement for more troops will be urgent.

5. If the ARVN is called upon to operate in Southern Laos this will raise troop requirements.

6. The main reasons set forth by Diem for the increase are: a) to guard against a DRV drive across the 17th parallel, b) to set up effective border controls, c) to prosecute the counter guerrilla operations, d) to allow relief and retraining of his present troops who are fully committed.

7. MAAG, CINCPAC and JCS are now weighing the above and other factors to determine whether Diem needs 270,000. General Taylor has prompted an inquiry by JCS to MAAG and CINCPAC on whether the present training rate for the 20,000 increase cannot be accelerated.

8. JCS is requesting CINCPAC and MAAG to set forth their strategy for destroying the Viet Cong. This should reveal data applicable to the problem of whether the 270,000 force level makes sense.

Q: *Are we getting prepared on a contingency basis if the Viet Nam question gets into the United Nations?*

Ans: Task Force Viet Nam has requested INR to assemble a dossier (including photos) of DRV aggression in SVN. CIA will cooperate with INR.

Q: *Would it be a good idea to request General Taylor to have a look on the ground at the military administrative program?*

Ans: We think it would, if the General has the time.

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86. Editorial Note

On July 8, as Ambassador Nolting was returning to his residence in mid-afternoon from the Embassy chancery in Saigon, two unidentified men on a motor bicycle threw a hand grenade at his automobile. The grenade hit the automobile, but did not explode. The assailants escaped. In telegram 34 from Saigon later that day, Nolting briefly described what had happened. Expressing the hope that "no special notice" would be taken of the incident, Nolting said

that the Embassy would continue business as usual. (Department of State, Central Files, 123—Nolting, Frederick E.)

To prevent unnecessary anxiety on the part of American residents in Saigon, Nolting issued a notice on July 11 urging that they also continue business as usual but that they conduct themselves prudently in the near future. A copy of the notice was sent to the Department of State as an enclosure to despatch 27 from Saigon, July 13, which provided further details on the July 8 incident and concluded that the evidence suggested that the attack "was not part of a campaign of terror directed against Americans but was more probably an isolated incident instigated by overzealous but unskilled Viet Cong cadres." (*Ibid.*)

On July 31, Nolting wrote to Cottrell about the safety of Americans in Vietnam and enclosed reports of rumored Viet Cong terrorist activities in the Saigon area. Nolting stated that he was not requesting any specific protective actions but was merely letting Cottrell know "how things look to me in connection with the security of Americans, and to send you some of the confusing reports with which we are daily confronted." The Ambassador concluded:

"What it all adds up to in my judgment—and, I think it is fair to say, in that of our Security Watch Committee—is a scare campaign on the part of our adversary to weaken and if possible destroy U.S. influence and action in this country. To the threats, the Communists add from time to time an action or two, to lend credence to the threats. What, if anything more, they can or will do remains to be seen. We here are unanimous on the proposition that we will not be bluffed, or terrorized, out of the necessary work to be done here.

"The safety of American dependents weighs heavily on my mind, as you can well understand. In the light of all evidence available to me, I see no reason for changing our present policy with respect to dependents, which is that they should be permitted to come to this post, subject to a full briefing of the officer concerned on the conditions here, after which he should make his own decision. If directly asked, I should myself say that I see no compelling reason not to bring dependents." (*Ibid.*, Vietnam Working Group Files: Lot 66 D 193, Administration—U.S. Embassy Saigon)

On May 23, 1962, a special military tribunal in Saigon condemned to death four students for various acts of terrorism and sabotage. One of them was implicated in the assassination attempt on Ambassador Nolting, although the student claimed his participation was indirect. (Telegram 1523 from Saigon, May 25, 1962; *ibid.*, Central Files, 751K.00/5–2562)

87. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, July 10, 1961—9:45 p.m.

35. Task Force VN. Keen interest in Viet-Nam continues at highest levels here, status reports are widely read as well as individual reports from all U.S. agencies in Viet-Nam. At this point we have need and request for a personal general assessment from Ambassador Nolting as to how he views our progress. For example does he believe Diem reforms in military command, intelligence, economic and social fields are taking hold? Or are they mere paper devices to cover Diem's continued personal detailed management? How successful was the recent Delta sweep? Will it be followed up by further sweeps of same area as means establishing real sterilization? Is this example of improved military coordination planning and strategy or does [it] represent flashy operation without real permanent improvement in area? Is there any effective central planning done by any agency other than Diem himself? Is real progress discernable as result recent U.S. moves or is progress expected or is it business as usual? What is your judgment GVN's control security situation Saigon in view grenade attempt on you? [2] Assessment need not be limited to above subjects but these are the type of questions which are being asked. Reply by the Ambassador will give weight to the answers relayed to highest levels.

Rusk

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/7-1061. Secret; Priority. Drafted by Cottrell and Wood, cleared with McConaughy, initialed by Cottrell for the Secretary, and repeated to CINCPAC.

[2] See *supra*.

88. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the Secretary of State [1]

Washington, July 13, 1961.

To follow up on our conversation of yesterday.[2] You say, quite rightly, that if we raise the Viet-Nam issue on an international level "we must be ready to go." This could mean these things:

1. We must know quite precisely what kind of international action we want—action which might radically reduce the external component in Diem's guerrilla war.

2. If international action is unsatisfactory, we must be prepared, depending on circumstances and timing, for three levels of follow-up:

—A sharp increase in the number of Americans in South Viet-Nam for training and support purposes;

—A counter-guerrilla operation in the north, possibly using American Air and Naval strength to impose about the same level of damage and inconvenience that the Viet Cong are imposing in the south;

—If the Vietminh cross their border substantially, a limited military operation in the north; e.g., capture and holding of the port of Haiphong.

3. As I see it, the purpose of raising the Viet-Nam issue as a case of aggression is either to induce effective international action or to free our hands and our consciences for whatever we have to do. The optimum goal is to create a more persuasive deterrent position with respect to the Laos conference and Viet-Nam. At the minimum we put ourselves in a political position to salvage South Laos and save Viet-Nam with a more rational military plan than we now have.

4. I would underline this. I do not believe that raising the issue requires that we be immediately prepared, if we do not succeed, to go for Hanoi; it merely clears the ground for direct action and, in so doing, creates more effective support for whatever negotiations we may have in Southeast Asia.

5. Behind all this is a view, which I believe Alexis Johnson shares, that we are unlikely to be able to negotiate anything like a satisfactory Laos settlement unless the other side believes that we are prepared, as an alternative to a satisfactory settlement, to fight. My anxiety has been that our present military plan, focussed on the

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/7-1361. Secret. Initialed by Rostow.

[2] No other record of this conversation has been found.

Mekong Valley (which I assume the other side knows), might not be an effective and persuasive deterrent. I would assume that a posture aimed more directly against North Viet-Nam is more likely to be diplomatically persuasive.

6. Whatever organizational arrangements may commend themselves for Southeast Asia to you, I suspect it would be helpful if we were to provide some regular forum soon where we could consider the Laos and Viet-Nam problems together; their relation to Thailand and the rest of Asia; and their relation to Berlin planning.

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89. Paper Prepared by the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (McGarr) [1]

Saigon, July 13, 1961.

Question: Are reforms in military command really taking hold or are they mere paper devices to cover Diem's continued personal detailed management?

Answer: A review of the recent accomplishments by the GVN in the military field as the result of MAAG continued and intensive urging over a period of many months convinces me that real progress is being made in this vital field. These reforms, starting with the Transfer of the Civil Guard to the DOD in the fall of 1960, and in particular, the recent command and territorial reorganization of military and para-military forces, as recommended by the CIP, [2] have resulted in significant changes in the basic structure of the VN military establishment. These important and far reaching command reforms so long recommended are designed and, under MAAG guidance and supervision in the implementation phase, are progressing towards the desired goal of a clear, sound chain of military command which encourages initiative and the assumption of responsibility at all levels. As a result of representations by MAAG during the recent Vinh Binh operations, the President has reversed the

[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Secret. Attached to a memorandum of July 13 from McGarr to Nolting, in which McGarr said he was commenting on specific military questions raised in telegram 35 to Saigon, July 10. (Document 87) Both the source text and the covering memorandum are apparently copies furnished Rostow who then passed them on to Taylor. In the margin of the covering memorandum is written the following note: "General Taylor. You will wish to read this. Walt."

[2] See Document 1.

previous assignment to Province Chiefs, of certain ARVN units in this area.

Specifically, the military reorganization of the RVNAF includes the operational activation of the Field Command as the responsible military tactical operations agency for all of VN, the territorial redivision of the country and assignment of responsibility to the three Corps, and the establishment of Logistic Commands to replace Military Regions. These are all major accomplishments, carried out during a period of increased Viet Cong activity, with a high degree of urgency and efficiency. Troop units have been physically moved with the minimum of disruption of daily operations. And two large control headquarters, Headquarters Field Command and III Corps, which until the reorganization were largely "paper organizations," have assumed actual operational control while still organizing and receiving their communications equipment. The vital logistics reorganization is taking shape as recommended and the Log Commands daily assume more of their full responsibility.

This logical command and territorial organization continues down from Corps to Division Sectors with the clear assignment of responsibility and the troops to do the job. For large scale operations the division commander will exercise command and use his own chain of command. For small operations the Province Chief (sub-sector commander) will exercise control under the supervision of the Division Commander. It should, of course, be recognized that fully effective implementation of all the military command recommendations will take considerable time and that it is complicated by the continuing heavy commitment of military and para-military units to counter-insurgency missions. A time lag in accomplishing a reorganization of this magnitude can be expected even in more advanced armies than that of Vietnam—over which we have advisory control only.

Military reorganization and realignment of functions has not been restricted to the field units. Plans for major decentralization from DOD to the Joint Staff continue to be refined. The Joint Staff is devoting increased attention to policy matters of a broader nature since it relinquished operational control of combat units to Field Command. These actions also take time, but I am impressed by the progress already made.

Question: How successful was the recent delta sweep?

Answer: From a purely military point of view the operation was considered a success. There were four primary objectives:

a. To test the command relationships between the reorganized military and the civil chain of command, particularly at the Province Chief level.

b. To offset the psywar propaganda of the Viet Cong which states that Vinh Binh Province is a "denied area" to RVNAF.

c. To clear out as many Viet Cong as possible in the area and restrict further Viet Cong activity.

d. To search out and destroy Viet Cong weapons depots, training camps, and bases of operation.

Although this operation disclosed certain deficiencies in coordination and detailed planning, as was to be expected in the initial operation under a new command arrangement, it did represent a major step forward in carrying out the military command and operational principles recommended in the CIP. The chain of command was clear cut from Field Command through the III Corps Commander and the 21st Division Commander to the Combat Units. The joint preplanning, although held closely for security reasons, was very good. Although because of this, implementation of the plan needed improvement. The Province Chief did not interfere with the military aspects of the operation and, in fact, assisted in every way possible. All elements of the RVNAF involved in this operation, and particularly the JGS, Field Command and III Corps, will benefit greatly from the lessons learned.

The objective of "showing the flag" to offset VC propaganda was clearly accomplished. The PsyWar Companies' actions were closely coordinated with the operation throughout and were quite effective. ARVN forces were seen in force throughout the area. Now that major operational forces have been withdrawn it will depend on the civil administration, supported as necessary by local military and/or para-military forces, to maintain security. Currently, one ARVN battalion and two ranger companies remain in the area to ensure take-over and orderly control by security forces under the civil administration authorities.

A large quantity of equipment and supplies was captured and/or destroyed to include weapons, boats, kerosene, food caches, and other miscellaneous VC equipment. In addition, a dispensary, a training center, a crude small arms factory, and a supply center were overrun and captured. 26 VC were killed, 37 captured, and another 37 suspects taken into custody. While these figures may not seem impressive at first glance, and undoubtedly some VC as individuals eluded military forces by water, it is the nature of counter-guerrilla warfare that identification and elimination of guerrillas is a long, gruelling and costly process. It is not one that lends itself to sudden and spectacular success. In view of the very large area covered by one division of five battalion equivalents, these results are good.

Question: Will it be followed up by further sweeps of the same area as means of establishing real sterilization?

Answer: This operation was not the traditional French type "sweep". It was a joint operation by Air–Navy–Ground Forces which was coordinated with Provinces on either side of Vinh Binh. There are no known plans at this time for further operations of this nature in same area. However, General Khanh, Chief of Staff, has assured me they intend to ensure take-over and control by the civil and security forces before complete ARVN pull out. The MAAG concept for sterilization of an area as contained in the Proposed Counter-Insurgency Plan for Vietnam visualizes military operations being phased out of an area by the gradual but integrated take-over by security forces and civilian control. Permanent pacification or sterilization can never be accomplished by military sweeps or even more valid military action alone. In this operation, there was insufficient civil-military preplanning for application at the outset of the concomitant political, social, economic and psychological measures required to assure permanent pacification. Even when present operations in Vinh Binh are accomplished, large scale military operations by regular forces will again be required if other measures prove inadequate in the face of renewed, determined VC activities. This remains to be seen.

Question: Is this an example of improved military coordination, planning, and strategy, or does it represent a flashy operation without real permanent improvement in these areas?

Answer: MAAG does not agree with the implication that RVNAF puts on "flashy" operations. This force is too heavily committed to allow for such tactics. We are strongly of the opinion that a genuine improvement in coordination, planning and strategy is in the making as indicated by this and other recent operations. The recent reorganization of the chain of command and subsequent clarification of implementing directives has every chance of significantly improving military operations. Valuable lessons were learned from this operation which have already been pointed out by Chief MAAG to senior military authorities who are now working on improvements. However, the worth of the entire military operation in Vietnam cannot and should not properly be evaluated on one single operation. If properly applied, they will materially improve subsequent operations. Particularly encouraging is the evidence of renewed offensive spirit and motivation on the part of the military who took part in the planning and execution of this operation. From personal observations, I can assure you that enthusiasm, determination and seriousness of purpose on the part of military personnel at all levels was clearly evident.

Question: Is there any effective central planning done by any agency other than Diem himself?

Answer: In the military field: Yes. For example, as previously reported, planning and execution by DOD, JGS and lower levels in implementation of CIP recommendations for reorganization, and repositioning of forces and as indicated in the recent Vinh Binh operation. Of course, there will continue to be room for improvement. For example, the Military Assistant to the Director of the Cabinet is developing a policy paper on National Objectives in hopes of obtaining its approval as a basis for further national military planning. At his request, MAAG is currently reviewing the study. Also, the J-1 of the JGS has recently completed a study on further increases in RVNAF, copies of which have been provided MAAG. It is generally in consonance with the MAAG Requisite Force Structure Study, except that it contemplates a slower rate of build up. As you know, Field Command conceived the recent military operation in Vinh Binh Province and planned it in conjunction with III Corps Headquarters. III Corps and 21st Division Headquarters carried it out with little or no interference from above. Again, a combined Vietnamese-US military committee is preparing field manuals on counter-insurgency operations using the MAAG Tactics and Techniques Study as one of their sources.

Question: Is real progress discernible as result of recent U.S. moves or is progress expected or is it business as usual?

Answer: In the military field, real progress has been made and there is every reason to hope that progress will continue. There is no doubt that military leaders at the national level are working long hours in a sincere effort to improve Vietnam's security situation. Their attitude is definitely not one of "business as usual," in the connotation of this question.

Command reorganization and the resultant establishment of a proper chain of command discussed earlier are, of course, only the long needed basis from which real operational changes begin. MAAG feels it unfortunate that this basis for improvement was deferred until the agreements on the overall CIP were reached. I feel that GVN has made considerable progress in training and in the operational field. A concept of employment for Civil Guard units has been developed which serves as the basis for all CG training. This program includes special leadership as well as individual and unit training, all oriented toward anti-guerrilla combat. Ranger training has continued to receive high priority and emphasis as has ranger type training for all combat units of ARVN.

In the field of operations, progress has been made in the cooperation between Air and Ground units. This cooperation involving quick reaction times for air support is of extreme importance and in pertinent operations this year has had good success. Concepts have been developed for use of specially training forces using

helicopters and necessary training implementation is under way. Permission for MAAG advisors to assist RVNAF units in operations down to battalion and separate company size units has begun to produce some tangible results. Chief MAAG has requested that the President give his support to ensuring further implementation by Commanders in this area. We are, of course, pushing for much needed improvement in both the training and operations areas. Although MAAG holds the RVNAF to U.S. standards, it should be realistically recognized that these will not be attained immediately.

After considerable delay due to circumstances beyond GVN and MAAG control, ARVN is now moving ahead with its increase to a strength of 170,000. Current plans contemplate all units to be activated by December. Although activation of certain elements of the 20,000 increase has taken place, unfortunately, it has not progressed to the point for which the increase was justified, of permitting rotation of major units for badly needed rest, rehabilitation, and unit training.

In summary, I feel the time for changes of this magnitude, especially under the pressures of a daily hot war, must be recognized. While I am far from satisfied or complacent, and fully recognize the urgency and need for continued improvement, I am not pessimistic but rather I am impressed by the concrete accomplishments made by the GVN in the military command and operations fields. GVN and RVNAF have not implemented all of our military recommendations, nor have they fully completed certain of the projects initiated, however, I feel they are making progress as fast as could reasonably be expected.

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90. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, July 14, 1961—1 p.m.

66. Task Force VN 22/25 [2] SFG, in association Vietnamese colleagues, briefed President Diem July 11th on special action program, outcome of SFG operations during past three weeks. Diem was joined by senior ministers; Ambassador Nolting, DCM, USOM Di-

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 120.1551K/7-1461. Secret; Priority. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Reference is to numbered paragraphs in Document 56.

rector, Chief MAAG, also present. Briefing considered major step forward towards US objectives Vietnam.

1. Costs of military and economic programs for 18 months through December 31, 1962 were projected at $85.5 million and 6.5 billion piastres over and above present programs. Military estimates based on reaching force level of 200,000 by December 31, 1962.

2. Emergency economic and social action program involving additional aid designed specifically to support military effort, costing about $13.5 million and 1.8 billion piastres, was described, to be centered on communications, agrovilles, land development, rural medical programs, training civil administrators, and youth corps.

3. A long range development program designed to assist Vietnam achieve target of self-sustaining growth, was also described estimated to cost $30 million and 1 billion piastres more than ongoing programs. (It is thought that additional projects of this magnitude can be developed in the private and public sector in the next 18 months.)

4. Seven principles underlying the commercial aid program were agreed by both Vietnamese and US representatives. These points include joint planning of the external resources of both countries available for imports, agreement that VN foreign exchange reserves should be held in the region of $200 million, agreement that the program should be so handled not to widen gap in living standard between the wealthy and poorer classes nor harm sound infant industry, and other points designed to assure orderly programming, all within the balance of payments approach to determine Vietnam's requirements for commercial aid.

5. Various measures which might meet the additional piastre bill of 6.5 billion for QCP month ending December 31, 1962 were then described, including bank borrowing, 1.5 billion, an issue of victory bonds and stamps, 300 million, tax reform including tightening of collections, 1.25 billion piastres. The gap remaining after the mobilization of the 3.05 billion piastres possibly obtainable from the foregoing sources must be met from proceeds of commercial aid, which might be increased within the criteria described in para 4. Higher yields on the US aid dollar were advocated both by Dean Thuc and Dr. Staley as essential to resolve financial problem.

6. Finally, there was a joint suggestion that committees be established on Vietnamese side, and on American side, to oversee all aspects of Vietnamese/American aid activities and to assure progress of all action programs. These committees will include on Vietnamese side President and representatives of the military and of the social and economic ministries; on the American side, the Ambassador and CT representation. Subordinate committees, VN and US, would be activated on military and on social and economic affairs. These VN

and US committees will be considered "parallel" but will meet together; Diem preferred not to have them described as joint.

Comment: The result of this briefing has been to clear the air considerably on the problem of exchange rate and to stimulate GVN thinking, including Diem's, on the necessity to assure higher piastre yield on American aid dollar. Vietnamese, in general discussion, seemed anxious set target for higher amounts commercial aid, perhaps as hedge against expected fall in export receipts. National Assembly, however, has just acted to increase production taxes by 20 per cent which will increase budget yield on American aid dollar to nearly 60 piastres although amounts deposited counterpart including customs will remain at present level of about 43 piastres to dollar.

It is opportune that IMF representatives are now holding annual consultations with GVN overlapping SFG and their influence will undoubtedly be directed toward unification of piastre dollar exchange at rate of 73.50 or higher.

Task Force recognizes, however, that we have an emergency situation here, that momentum and confidence must be preserved and that in negotiations we should estimate liberally the amount of commercial aid that can usefully come in under the principles set forth in the joint study. Believe our theme should be, not that we want to set arbitrary limits on US aid, but that we want to help get the job done in manner and under arrangements conducive to sound economic growth and sound financial management in Vietnam. We also think that negotiations here on government-to-government level should be undertaken promptly in light of imaginative and persuasive SFG study.

Nolting

91. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President [1]

Washington, July 14, 1961.

You ask: What are the implications of the situation in Southeast Asia for the handling of the Berlin crisis?

I believe they are the following:

1. *Military Planning.* The scale of our military build-up should take account of a Southeast Asia crisis as well as a Berlin crisis. The state of East Germany makes me somewhat skeptical that Mr. K. will push Berlin too far this year; although he may go as far as the treaty. Moreover, the possibility of a Southeast Asia crisis means we should delay until relatively late in the game the actual commitment of forces to Europe.

2. *Public Presentation.* The military moves you take should be presented to our people, our allies, and the other side as justified not by Berlin but by a general heightening of danger in the world environment. We do not know whether access to Berlin will be cut; we do not know whether the offensive in Laos will be resumed. We do not know what scale of action the Viet-minh might mount in South Viet-nam; we do not know what lies behind K's threats to Iran; we do not know what mischief Castro plans in Latin America, etc.

Legally, there would be great advantage in presenting your proposals as a modification of existing emergency arrangements. We have lived since 1945—or at least June 1950—under emergency conditions. Your action should simply record your conviction that—in degree—the dangers have increased, and prudence calls for a stronger contingency position across the board.

At home, this line of approach would strengthen your hand in holding the line on foreign aid, space, and education. Increased insurance outlays do not justify breaking up a family's long-range planning, especially when the increased insurance is small in relation to the family's income and income is rising rapidly.

This approach would avoid charges among certain elements in Europe that the U.S. is excessively excited and aggressive about Berlin.

With Khrushchev, this approach would minimize the challenge to his prestige on the Berlin issue, of which the CIA evaluation

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Regional Security Series, Southeast Asia—General. Secret.

makes so much;[2] and it would make it easier for him to talk or let the thing die down.

3. *Asian Opinion.* This approach would reassure our Asian allies that we are not so obsessed by Berlin that we are going to bug out in Southeast Asia. The Russians are using this interval to put the heat on Thailand; and, elsewhere as well, we can expect them to try to exploit our concentration on Berlin.

4. *The ChiComs.* We must draft instructions for enlarged conversation with the Chinese Communists, who have indicated a desire to talk with us over a widened range. It is essential that we communicate to them that our concern with Berlin does not mean that we are unmindful of Asia. Incidentally, I believe you should personally take a hand in formulating these instructions.

5. *Planning.* Finally, the forming up of a Berlin posture underlines the urgency of getting a combined military-political contingency plan for Southeast Asia of the kind General Taylor and I have advocated. General Taylor has made progress on the Pentagon component; but we still lack a coherent State Department position, and we lack a forum or task force in which the military and political elements could be brought together.

6. *Speech.* Your talk to the American people in the next week or two should focus primarily on the world situation and our preparations to meet it, rather than primarily on Berlin.

This memorandum has the approval of General Taylor and Henry Owen.

[2] Not further identified

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92. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State[1]

Saigon, July 14, 1961—7 p.m.

70. Deptel 35 to Saigon.[2] Have for weeks been seeking answers to questions like those posed reference telegram. My reading of situation and prospects here, tending towards optimism, is neither

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/7-1461. Secret; Priority; Limit Distribution. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd, Vientiane, Bangkok, London, Geneva for FECON, Phnom Penh, and Paris.

[2] Document 87

static nor final, and is of course fallible. Views of high-caliber country team here difficult to pin down in common denominator, since assessments vary. Diplomats of friendly countries Saigon also not unanimous in their views, generally inclined to be more pessimistic than US. Intelligent and patriotic Vietnamese citizens, and even GVN officials, not of one accord re prospects of country or re necessary measures.

The following then are my personal views. I shall invite other members task force to forward their comments, if they see matters differently in general or in any particulars.

In the two months that I have been here I have traveled widely in country, generally in company President Diem and several of his cabinet. Have also spent many hours in private conversation with Diem, whom I like and admire as a person. The trips have been worthwhile, I think, despite fact that much of what I saw was dressed up for President's visit. (I feel certain that Department [*Diem?*] would prefer to see things in the raw, and was not trying particularly to impress me; but a certain amount of artificiality is nevertheless built into such visits.) Trips have extended to all areas of Vietnam, including about 100 kilometers of Laotian border, except far north, which I hope to visit soon. They have provided opportunity to compare conditions and attitudes other sections of country with those in Saigon.

Distinction should be made, I think, between two aspects of situation here, often confused: (A) What is Vietnamese Government (which means President Diem) striving for? Are his philosophy, objectives, and moral values sound in terms US interests in world? (B) How are these being put into effect? How are they being understood and received by Vietnamese people? Is progress rapid enough to keep pace with increased pressure? If not, what can be done about it?

Regarding (A), I think President Diem's philosophy of government, and his objectives for his country, are sound and good. After many hours of fundamental discussions, I am convinced that he is no dictator, in the sense of relishing power for its own sake. On the contrary, he seems to me to be a man dedicated to high principles by himself and his people; a man who would prefer to be a monk rather than a political leader; a man who does not fundamentally enjoy power or the exercise of it. He is, nevertheless, an egoist in the sense that he believes (in my judgment, with some justification) that he can govern in South Vietnam, in general and in detail, better than anyone else now available; and that he knows more about the Communist movement in this area and how to combat it than anyone else. His own strong convictions, energy, and his faith in himself are both a strength and a weakness—a strength in providing

a counter-dynamic to communism, a weakness in causing over-concentration of governmental power and authority, consequent lack of governmental efficiency, and in offering a vulnerable political target. His philosophy of government, summed up in the term "personalism" (which does not mean personal dictatorship but rather the requirement for individual development much in the Aristotelian sense) is perhaps too lofty for popular understanding, but is certainly in my judgment sound and right, and compatible with US interests. (Please note July 7 expression of this philosophy sent Task Force Washington.[3]) Thus, I think the United States should have no hesitation on moral grounds in backing Diem to the hilt. Where we think he is wrong, we can bring about ameliorations and improvements gradually in proportion to the confidence which he has in us and in his ability to make concessions without slipping.

Re (B), my (Limit Distribution) assessment is less clear-cut. There is no question that Diem and his government have felt an increasing upsurge of confidence in the US over the past 6 months, despite developments in Laos. High US expressions of support, backed by concrete and continuing actions, have had real effect. First commandment of task force report—to build confidence—was, in my judgment, soundly conceived, is being carried out, and is being reciprocated. Strong and evident US support has brought to the government side a certain number of fence-sitters, and has also probably considerably reduced the likelihood of a military coup d'etat. It has at the same time made Diem an even more vulnerable target of Communist attack, which has, I fear, carried some people into the enemy's camp. Diem himself realizes this and that is why he is so eager to get across the thought that victory of the Vietnamese people over Communist subversion has title [?] gained through Vietnamese sacrifice and not directly through American or free world protection. Nevertheless, I do not think it is true that US support has given President Diem's government as yet a net increase in popularity among the Vietnamese people. Oddly enough, Diem's own keen personal interest in and knowledge of theoretical things of life, such as farming, fishing, disease, teaching methods, construction methods and techniques, are misinterpreted or distorted by many Vietnamese into the picture of a remote and aloof man who has little interest in the welfare of the common man. This is due in part, I think, to his manner and in part to Communist propaganda. It is definitely a false picture, judging from many trips and much discussion. In any case, it seems to me clear that in some way the Diem government must make a "break-through" to regain popular support. If the situation drags on in an inconclusive manner for many

[3] Not further identified.

more months, either a military coup, or an open proclamation of a Communist Government and widespread civil war, is likely.

I agree that the key to such a break-through is sufficient military and security forces, and skillful selection thereof, to guarantee protection and a free choice to the people in Vietnam, especially in the country districts. At present, despite all efforts, this protection does not exist in many areas. In fact, while accurate statistics on the degree of security are not obtainable, and while the situation varies from province-to-province and from district-to-district, I do not believe that the net security situation is any better now than it was 2 months ago. There have been some encouraging statistics, such as the percentage of actions being initiated by government forces against Viet Cong[4] forces against 75 percent initiated by VC four months ago), which in turn seems to reflect more intelligence coming in from countryside. (This ratio has recently slipped again.) On the other hand, there are reports of very large losses of rice to Viet Cong (being checked and reported separately), instances of refusal from fear to identify assassins, and the establishment of VC "governments" parallel to GVN authority in some areas, collecting taxes and issuing VC money. All of which adds up to a very mauve picture, but one which is certainly not conclusively getting better. In our attempt to help create a new and winning psychology, I have taken a much more optimistic line in conversations with other diplomats and with press here than that reflected above, and I think we should continue to do so, giving benefit of the doubt wherever possible to optimistic assessment.

Re security situation Saigon itself, there is no evident change over past several months, aside from shooting up of USOM officer Davis's car about ten miles out of Saigon a week ago, and grenade attempt at me last Saturday. We have been trying to figure out what these mean in terms of security of Americans here, but cannot be categoric. Facts are that no arrests made to date in either incident. There was reluctance on the part of eye witnesses to Davis' shooting to testify or identify assailant. Vietnamese police and sûreté are conscientiously working on cases, but no concrete results to date. After a study, we have gotten out a note to Americans here, based on conclusion that recent attacks do not seem to foreshadow wider terrorist activities against Americans, but recommending increased prudence and circumspection.

MAAG is writing detailed evaluation of recent sweep in Vinh Binh Province, which should be ready shortly.[5] My impressions to date are that combined operation, first of its kind, was fairly

[4] Omission in the source text.
[5] Not found.

efficient and effective militarily, that most of Viet-Cong escaped net, and that while much territory was liberated, there is question as to who will control it after bulk of forces withdrawn. Some Ranger battalions are being left there, and some civic action being undertaken by army units. In general, however, it appears that this sweep points up the long-felt need of utmost coordination between military actions and quick follow-up on social and economic programs. We have not licked this problem yet.

Re GVN reforms in military command, intelligence, economic and social fields, the following is a quick personal assessment.

Military command: Despite some reports to contrary, my evaluation is that reform in military command is producing many desired results, and will produce more. Diem's proclivity to interfere with military authority will be further reduced as his own confidence in US support and in loyalty his military forces increases. Confidence on both fronts is increasing.

Intelligence: While GVN central intelligence organization not yet fully functioning, prospects are good and we expect increasing results.

Economic and social measures: Work of Staley group with Vietnamese opposite numbers, resulting in effective briefing of Diem and Cabinet July 11th,* has opened new prospect and given real boost to possibilities in these fields. This, added to continued effective work of USOM and USIS, plus greater emphasis on part GVN as reflected in recent Cabinet shifts, hold prospects of increasing success. Much depends on US backing and particularly on greater flexibility and promptness to follow-through.

Re effective central planning, we have come up with a recommendation, embodied in joint briefing July 11 and accepted by Diem, of a mechanism which promises to produce more effective planning and implementation of joint programs. We must assure that these programs bear the stamp "Made in Viet-Nam" rather than "Made in America", and we must keep constantly on alert lest oral or written undertakings by GVN substitute for concrete end products—something which can happen here.

In general, I am optimistic. I believe we taking the right track. It is a question of how fast and effectively we can advance.

Nolting

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* See Document 90

93. Letter From the Vietnam and United States Special Financial Groups to Presidents Diem and Kennedy [1]

Saigon, July 14, 1961.

The Viet Nam and United States Special Financial Groups charged with considering the means of further cooperation between their two countries for mutually shared purposes have the honor to propose to their respective governments the attached joint program of action.

Viet Nam is today under attack in a bitter, total struggle which involves its survival as a free nation. Its enemy, the Viet Cong, is ruthless, resourceful, and elusive. This enemy is supplied, reinforced, and centrally directed by the international Communist apparatus operating through Hanoi. To defeat it requires the mobilization of the entire economic, military, psychological, and social resources of the country and vigorous support from the United States.

The long-term economic future of Viet Nam is bright. In fact, the promising start already made toward improvement in the living conditions of its people appears to be one of the factors which precipitated the recent intensification of Communist pressure. The contrast between the achievements of recent years in South Viet Nam and the hardships and failure in Communist North Viet Nam was becoming too glaring. Given the means to throw back the Communist attack and to resume its march of economic, social, and political progress, Viet Nam can be an example in Southeast Asia for the progressive potentialities of men who are determined to remain free. We strongly urge that our two governments make this the purpose of their continued cooperation.

At the moment, however, the primary problem is the restoration of internal security in the face of tough, widespread, externally aided Communist guerrilla warfare and subversion. To meet this problem requires stepped-up military and policing action. But the problem is more than a military problem. Its solution also demands stepped-up economic and social action, especially in rural areas, closely inte-

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Regional Security Series, Southeast Asia—Rostow Report Second Try Secret. The attached report, along with this covering letter, are printed in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pp. 182–209.

Although the letter and the attached report, not printed here, are both undated, the letter was probably signed by Thuc and Staley on July 14, the day the Staley mission departed Vietnam. Staley's appointment book indicates that the two men held their final meeting on that day and issued a joint communique. Staley's appointment book and a copy of the communique are in Staley Papers, Palo Alto, California. Staley later recalled that he had signed the report during the final meeting with Thuc. (Department of State, Office of the Historian, Vietnam Interviews, February 16, 1984)

grated with the military action. For example, one of the more promising counter-guerrilla methods tried up to this time involves regrouping scattered rural populations into more readily defensible communities so designed and assisted as also to offer improved opportunities for livelihood.

Recognizing this close interdependence of the military and the economic-social problems, we have based our recommendations on the following three central considerations:

1. The military-internal security requirements must for the time being have first call on Viet Nam's manpower and economic resources and on U.S. assistance. This is a short-term but essential requirement.

2. At the same time, the degree to which the military-internal security operations achieve lasting success will, in large measure, depend on the speed and effectiveness with which the recommended emergency economic and social programs are applied.

3. The ultimate objective of these economic and social programs and of the longer-range development planning which we also recommend is to hasten the day when Viet Nam will be a self-sustaining economy and a peaceful, free society. This is desired by the Vietnamese, who want to be independent in the fullest sense, and by the Americans, who conceive their aid as helping people to help themselves toward a condition where they can continue to progress by their own efforts.

The recommendations which our two groups, working jointly together, have thus prepared call for major increases in the level of effort of both Viet Nam and the United States.

These increases reflect our sincere conviction that the subversive, intensive warfare being waged today in South Viet Nam can be brought to a successful conclusion only by the prompt application of effective military power, coupled with large-scale economic and social action reaching every part of the country, especially the rural areas. From the financial standpoint, we believe it far less costly to provide fully adequate resources today than to attempt to match Communist initiatives with just enough strength to meet each new threat. The first course offers a real possibility of early victory and thus an end to the tragic waste of human life and of the material assets so sorely needed for the economic development of the country. The second, while less costly in terms of current budgets, will not provide sufficient resources to achieve a decisive defeat of the Viet Cong organization and therefore will, in the long run, prove more expensive as the war drags on with increased intensity year after year.

Accordingly, the intensified program which we recommend our two countries adopt as a basis for mutual actions over the next several years is designed not just to hold the line but to achieve a

real breakthrough. Our joint efforts must surpass the critical threshold of the enemy's resistance, thereby putting an end to his destructive attacks, and at the same time we must make a decisive impact on the economic, social, and ideological front.

Respectfully,

Viet Nam Special Financial Group	*U.S. Special Financial Group*
Vu Quoc Thuc, Chairman	Eugene Staley, Chairman
Duong Tan Tai	Colonel Edwin F. Black
Dinh Quang Chieu	William W. Diehl
Huynh Van Diem	Paul F. Geren
Luu Van Tinh	Herman Kleine
Buu Hoan	Warren A. Silver[2]

[2] Printed from a copy that bears these typed signatures.

94. Paper Prepared by the President's Military Representative (Taylor) [1]

Washington, July 15, 1961.

1. President Diem in his letter of June 9 to President Kennedy [2] has requested an increase of his Army to 270,000 from the presently approved ceiling of 170,000. To respond to this request it is first necessary to determine the missions which have been or may be assigned to this force. They are considered to fall under the following headings:

a. Internal security;
b. Defense against a conventional attack by North Vietnam;
c. Defense against further guerrilla infiltrations across frontiers.

2. The forces for the first two missions, a and b, can be estimated fairly readily (although a may change if c is not carried out), but those for the third will depend on the over-all strategy to be followed and the help obtainable from Thai, Laotian and U.S. sources. If the defense against further infiltration is static along the

[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Regional Security Southeast Asia—Rostow Report Second Try Secret. A note on the source text indicates that Lemnitzer accepted Taylor's suggestions.

[2] See footnote 3, Document 69.

frontiers of South Vietnam, one set of forces is required. If an offensive solution is sought involving a movement of Vietnamese forces into Laos against the avenues of infiltration coupled perhaps with offensive air and guerrilla action against enemy forces, a different set of forces will be required. Thus, there is need of an over-all Southeast Asian politico-military plan assigning missions to national forces, establishing requirements in manpower, equipment and funds for each country and making provision for the means to satisfy the requirements.

3. To initiate the military portion of such a plan, I would suggest asking the Joint Chiefs to produce an outline plan drawn on the following bases:

a. *Assumption*

Under any set of circumstances growing out of the current Laos negotiations, it will be most important to secure and hold enough of the Mekong Valley and the Laotian panhandle to protect South Vietnam and Thailand from conventional attack or guerrilla penetration from North Laos and North Vietnam. In so doing it may become necessary or desirable to mount air attacks against targets in North Laos and North Vietnam, and to launch and support offensive guerrilla operations in these areas. Also during such operations, the United States should have a continuing capability to threaten and, if necessary, to carry out military operations from the sea against vital targets in North Vietnam.

b. *Guidelines*

(1) Thus it may be necessary to perform three tasks, i.e., (1) the securing of the Laotian panhandle and parts of the Mekong Valley, (2) the launching of offensive air and guerrilla operations from the panhandle, and (3) the application of military pressure against North Vietnam.

(2) To do the first two tasks, we should make maximum use of indigenous ground forces, employing largely Laotian, South Vietnamese and Thai troops with the United States' role limited, to the extent possible, to the provision of logistical support. If further study indicates that indigenous forces are not sufficient or do not have the motivation to perform these two tasks, then we need to know the minimum U.S. forces necessary to stiffen the operation and assure its success. In this case, it would be hoped that the U.S. combat forces could be limited to air forces, to the ground forces necessary to provide immediate protection to U.S. air and supply bases, and the Special Force trainers needed to support the guerrilla and anti-guerrilla effort. Although, in principle, it would be desirable to obtain the participation of other SEATO countries apart from those mentioned above, the present study is directed at determining the capabilities of local indigenous forces representing countries with a vital stake in the immediate outcome.

c. *Requirements*

(1) Under the terms of the foregoing discussion, an outline plan is desired to accomplish the three tasks mentioned above, utilizing local indigenous forces to the maximum. This plan should be divided into two parts:

(a) The evaluation of the extent to which "volunteer" Thai and Vietnam forces in conjunction with the FAL could accomplish the first mission, namely, the securing of the panhandle and portions of the Mekong Valley to block the further infiltration of Vietnam and Thailand by Communist-inspired forces from the North. Assume no U.S. help other than logistical and no formally declared state of war.

(b) An estimate of the forces required, indigenous and U.S., to accomplish tasks 1, 2 and 3 above. In the case of Vietnamese forces, determine the total required for all missions, internal and external, in order to serve as a guide in responding to Diem's request of June 9 for an increase in his army of 100,000.

(2) Under both cases, the outline plan should include a time schedule for implementation, an evaluation of the likelihood of success, and a recommendation as to how to proceed.

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95. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, July 16, 1961—5 p.m.

76. Task Force VN 22/26. Following briefing reported Embtel 66 [2] President Diem invited SFG for tea at Palace July 13th.

Appears from Staley's account this interview, which lasted three hours all told, that President Diem now finds a measure of currency reform desirable, and he changed in his own hand portion of joint report [3] dealing with piastre receipts from sale commercial aid to read as follows:

"There is complete agreement in the joint group on the desirability of simplifying and unifying Vietnamese system exchange. In other words a single and realistic exchange rate instead of present multiple rate system is recommended."

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 120.1551K/7-1661. Secret; Priority. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Document 90.

[3] See Document 93.

VN members joint group expressed pleasure to Staley at this action of Diem's stating that "this commits the President to our way of thinking."

Its first step in direction of unification and as measure to increase receipts from imports, GVN now considering adding "premium" of 25 piastres to 35 piastres official exchange, with customs duties and excise levies additive above and beyond the new basic 60 (composed of exchange 35 and exchange premium 25). To effectuate this move expert financial advice is needed and IMF group now present are offering to leave a financial technician temporarily to assist GVN work out details of necessary regulations.

Comment: Such a drastic measure clearly involves much administrative procedure both in modification of present exchange operations and in measures to tax away windfall profits.

Foregoing I most hopeful result of SFG operations and is reason most cordial congratulations. Obtaining such substantial additional revenues for GVN budget will go far to buttress GVN efforts in civilian as well as military sections.

I believe stage is now set for comprehensive agreement with GVN to include three major measures:

(1) Agreement 200,000 force level (with further increase remaining under study).

(2) Establishment of exchange premium of 25 piastres on substantially all imports, over and above present 35 rate, with a sliding scale of customs duties added (see following telegram).[1]

(3) Agreement on commercial aid at level sufficiently high to assure meeting aid requirements subject criteria described paragraph 4 Embtel 66. Generous estimate necessary for two good reasons. (A) assure GVN's confidence our intentions, (B) provide adequately for balance payments gap in probable shortfall GVN export receipts below estimates prepared for Congressional presentation.

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[1] Nolting elaborated on this point in telegram 80 from Saigon, July 18. (Department of State, Central Files, 120.1551K/7-1861)

Our suggestions for position to be adopted by US in negotiating long term aid agreement will follow.[5]

Nolting

[5] Apparently a reference to telegram 141 from Saigon, July 29, in which Nolting reported that it was urgent he be authorized to negotiate with the Vietnamese Government on the matters covered in the Special Financial Groups Report. One of the reasons for urgency, wrote Nolting, was that the Berlin crisis was being interpreted by some people in Saigon as making it more difficult for the United States to give increased and accelerated support to the Vietnamese Government, and that "we must demonstrate that we can act promptly and decisively wherever necessary." Nolting also stated:

"Reason for sense of urgency is not only inherent in situation here, where time is of essence, but also fact that momentum in forward planning developed over past several months seems to be waning a bit, also, ad hoc requests from GVN hard to handle in absence over-all plan with priorities, also rumors circulating re 'devaluation', which of course harmful to chances successful negotiations here (*Time* magazine Karnow mentioned these to me the other day)." (*Ibid.*, 120.1551K/7–2961)

VI. CONSIDERATION WITHIN THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT OF THE SPECIAL FINANCIAL GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS, JULY–AUGUST

96. Editorial Note

From June 8 through 25, a research and development team headed by William H. Godel, Deputy Director of the Department of Defense's Advanced Research Projects Agency, visited Vietnam to discuss with United States and Vietnamese officials the establishment of a joint research and development center. The visit was in response to Article 20 of the Presidential Program for Vietnam. (Document 56) In a conversation with Godel and McGarr on June 15, President Diem said, among other things, that he was very interested in the development of a defoliant and would prefer one that permitted subsequent agricultural growth. (Telegram MAGCH–CS 921, June 16; Washington National Records Center, RG 330, Lansdale Files: FRC 63 A 1803)

As a result of the visit, President Diem directed the Vietnamese Armed Forces to establish a Combat Development and Test Center to be commanded by a senior engineer officer, Colonel Trach, who was to report to him through the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. General McGarr concurred in the team's recommendation that a separate element be established within the Military Assistance Advisory Group, a research and development office composed initially of five people to form the United States component of the joint operation. The team also developed a precept for the establishment of the joint center which was approved by President Diem and Ambassador Nolting. Working with MAAG representatives and RVNAF authorities, the Godel team also prepared an initial list of problems and proposed projects to be considered by the center. In a memorandum of July 12 to Lansdale, Godel reported on the background and results of the team's visit. Attached to the memorandum was a copy of the precept for the center and the list of problems and proposed projects. (*Ibid.*, OASD/ISA Files: FRC 64 A 2382, Vietnam 092 Jan.–Oct. 1961)

A summary of Godel's report on his visit to the seminar on Southeast Asia at the Foreign Service Institute on July 6 is in a memorandum of July 7 from Robert H. Johnson to Walt W. Rostow. (Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Meetings and Memoranda, Staff Memos—Rostow)

On July 17, Godel discussed the results of his mission with the Vietnam Task Force. According to the minutes of this meeting:

"Mr. Cottrell introduced Mr. William Godel, an expert from the Department of Defense on the techniques and practices of psychological warfare. Pursuant to Article 20 of the Presidential Program Mr. Godel and a team of experts went to Saigon and established, in

conjunction with the ARVN, a combat development test center to experiment with new techniques and weapons for the guerrilla war that is being fought in Viet-Nam. The Vietnamese responded to the idea of a development test center with enthusiasm: Diem conducted no less than three personal interviews with Godel and assigned Colonel Trach to command it. Trach was placed directly under the supervision of the President. Among the new equipments introduced by Godel are: a power glider, a light highly-maneuverable aircraft which can fly for long periods on one tank of gasoline (an airborne Volkswagen), a paddle wheel boat with a steam engine burning cane alcohol which could operate in 3 inches of water, carrying 20 to 30 men, an armolite rifle, something the short, small Vietnamese can fire without bowling themselves over. This is a 22 caliber, commercially produced weapon with a high propellant charge. It could be used to great effect. It might be possible to issue this weapon to a ranger battalion and test it thoroughly under battle conditions. Dogs, trained to work with patrols, could introduce some mobility into the largely static patrol operations of the Vietnamese Army when night falls. Mr. Godel also explored many new techniques. Among them is a quiet, tiny, effective village alarm system that could alert the ARVN at a distance of 25 miles without giving away the identity of the village informer. This alarm system is being developed simultaneously with a similar project by ICA. ICA is developing a bulky piece of equipment, which could hardly be hidden and could be immediately spotted by the alert Viet Cong. Another experiment concerns a defoliant to denude border infiltration areas. This is a costly operation which would require some three years for maximum effectiveness. Godel spoke of a hormone plant killer to eradicate the manioc crop on which the Viet Cong subsist while operating in the northern mountain regions. Godel analyzed the problem of bringing medical aid to the villages and affirmed that this operation should be part of the ARVN's civic action program. Uniformed medical orderlies, corpsmen or aides could best perform this difficult task as they could protect themselves from the Viet Cong while public health teams, Americans or Vietnamese could not. The 'flying doctor' technique whereby sick villagers are flown to hospitals in the major urban centers could also help to ameliorate the problem. Godel also spoke of the problem in the areas where Montagnards, mountain people, live. These people resent the pretensions of the Vietnamese to govern them and administer their needs, what they would desire is a degree of autonomy within the Vietnamese state.

"Godel concluded that the program had begun well by showing the Vietnamese what kinds of weapons they need to fight their peculiar kind of war. The program will have, in time, a significant impact. Godel stressed that the procurement problem must be met by more expeditious handling of requests within the Defense Department for these special items of equipment." (Department of State, Vietnam Working Group Files: Lot 66 D 193, Minutes of TF Meetings)

97. Letter From Secretary of State for the Presidency Thuan to the Deputy Director of the Vietnam Task Force (Wood) [1]

Saigon, July 18, 1961.

DEAR BEN: Since I returned from Washington to my paper mill, quite a few things happened. So I want to write you a few words.

1. The financing problem for 20.000 additional men is solved as you know. May I have to say how much do I appreciate your help?

2. The Staley group has completed their report. They took a few trips to get a more precise idea of the Vietnamese context. On the spot they did realize the difficulties and they did see that we are working and fighting hard. Three major things have to be implemented right away: *increasing the force level, building up a wireless system for all villages,* and *expanding as much as we can the agrovilles network.* I get the impression that the Ambassador agrees with me. He took quite a few trips with President Diem and myself. He gets convinced now, I think, that we must have more troops to occupy different areas, to protect population and we have too to regroup them. If you don't occupy villages, the Commies get in and the population can't resist.

The village level is the basis. Silver will report to you longer about the trip we took yesterday in Kien Hoa Province. That's a successful test. The necessity is to act rapidly to create an impact right away. Better to increase noticeably the Armed Forces now to get rid of subversion in one or two years and to increase them afterwards than to take half measures. So, if Cottrell and yourself can get the force level of 200.000 approved for 1962 and the corresponding level of commercialised (*sic*) aid, i.e., 170 millions US$, that would help a lot.

3. You know the victory our troops got over the Commies in the Plaine des Joncs. The Communist unit knocked out is their best one. Objectively that's quite a hit. They lost 187 men and 10 prisoners. Weapons captured: 76. As far as I remember, nothing like that happened before to the Commies in South Viet-Nam, even during Indochinese war. I ask Silver to bring back to the Vietnamese Task Force a cane we got from the Commander of VC unit, namely Battalion 502. I would like that you will show it to President Kennedy. I have been in the front right away after the hit with newsmen. I did see the arms captured, the bodies all over in rice fields. We still have plenty of guts so don't worry about (us).

4. Our main difficulty: the rice situation. Many causes to that:

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878, TF VN 1961 Confidential.

a. Estimate made by Department of Agriculture too different from estimate made by provincial authorities about the rice production this year. The latter is less optimistic.

b. Smuggling through Cambodian border. They play on the "change" (exchange). Because of insecurity the black market rate of exchange is like that: 1.6 VN piaster for 1 riel. So people prefer to send rice to Cambodia to be exported and to change afterwards the riels they get into VN piasters at the "taux noir."

c. Communists prevent population to sell their rice.

d. Rumors about devaluation. Peasants prefer to keep rice than to get piasters.

I know that you are very busy Ben. I am too. So I stop here. My best to Cottrell the "dragon". Mes homages a Madame et mes amities a votre jeune fils de 14 ans.[2]

Truly yours,

Nguyen dinh Thuan[3]

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[2] On August 19, Wood sent a letter to Nolting enclosing a reply dated August 18 to Thuan, and asked Nolting to transmit the reply to Thuan. In his letter Wood congratulated Thuan on recent military victories by the Government of Vietnam, which he said "have been very encouraging to persons in our Government at every level." He also wrote that the questions raised by Thuan were ones that he worked on every day and that while some had been answered, "the others keep us so busy that I have postponed any plans of visiting Vietnam until early 1962." In a letter of August 28, Nolting informed Wood that he had sent Wood's letter to Thuan that day. All these letters are *ibid.*

[3] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

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98. Memorandum of a Conversation, Washington, July 18, 1961[1]

PARTICIPANTS

General Maxwell D. Taylor
Mr. U. Alexis Johnson
Mr. W. W. Rostow

The inter-connection between various elements of policy in Southeast Asia was discussed.

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Regional Security Southeast Asia—General. Secret. Prepared by Rostow on July 19. A note on the source text indicates that the original was sent to the President and copies to Taylor, Robert H. Johnson, and Steeves.

1. The problem of improving the diplomatic foundation for a military contingency plan which would be aimed in part against North Viet-Nam was considered. Mr. Johnson undertook (a) to collect and examine the persuasiveness of the evidence on North Viet-Nam aggression against South Viet-Nam; (b) to examine the best diplomatic forum or sequence of forums in which the issue might be raised. He expressed a tentative view that we might start with the ICC in Viet-Nam. If we did not get satisfaction there; if the legal status of Viet-Nam in relation to the United Nations was sound; and if the case was good enough, the matter might be then taken into the United Nations.

2. The lack of common feeling among the Vietnamese, the Cambodians, and the Thais was considered in relation to the possibility of mounting a local effort to protect that area from guerrilla warfare and subversion. It was agreed that, while the job might not be impossible, important political and psychological obstacles would have to be overcome. The crucial long-term need for such an association of effort was emphasized.

3. The problem of creating quickly a program for northeast Thailand and finding the funds to finance it without undue delay was examined.

4. The advantages of clearing out the Pathet Lao pocket at Tchepone was considered as well as the difficulties of doing it while the ceasefire still operated in Laos.

5. The possibility of using evidence of North Viet-Nam aggression as a foundation for more aggressive limited military action against North Viet-Nam was discussed.

6. It was agreed that Mr. Johnson would undertake to design a general set of guidelines for policy in Southeast Asia as a whole, as well as recommendations for the organization of more unified political and military staff work in Washington. All hands agreed that there was a sense in which the region was made up of quite disparate countries; but a number of important inter-connections isolated, notably these:

a. The stability of Thailand in relation to Laos and the outcome of the Laos negotiation.

b. The extent to which public evidence and international acknowledgement of North Vietnamese aggression against South Viet-Nam might affect the shape of our contingency planning in respect to a breakdown of the Laos conference.

c. The connection between the situation in the Laos panhandle and the pressure the Vietminh could exert on southern Viet-Nam.

d. The connection between the future of neutrality in Cambodia and the future of the Laos panhandle. [2]

[2] Rostow appended the following note to the memorandum: "On July 20 Mr. Johnson informed me that the Secretary of State had assigned Mr. Steeves full time to work on the problem of Southeast Asia as a whole."

99. Memorandum From the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Bundy) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Lemnitzer) [1]

I–16753/61 *Washington, July 19, 1961.*

SUBJECT

North Viet Nam

Continued Viet Minh subversive activities in South Viet Nam suggest the desirability of evaluating military measures which the U.S. might institute in reprisal against North Viet Nam. Accordingly, it is requested that the Joint Chiefs of Staff provide their views on the consequences and effectiveness of:

(1) Maritime control measures against North Viet Nam up to and including a blockade;
(2) Varying degrees of interdiction-type air and sea patrols (e.g. surface patrols along the coast from the 17th parallel southward, a barrier patrol from the Paracel Islands to the South Viet Nam coast, and air patrols across the northern border of South Viet Nam).

These measures, if approved, would supplement those actions recently approved by the President. As you are aware, the President, on 11 May, authorized various actions as listed on pages 4 and 5 of the Task Force Report on "Program of Action to Prevent Communist Domination of South Viet Nam", [2] with the objective of meeting the increased security threat resulting from the situation along the frontier between Laos and Viet Nam. Among these actions is the

[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OASD/ISA Files: FRC 64 A 2382, North Vietnam 1961 000.1. Top Secret. Drafted by J.W. Clinton and Robert H.B. Wade, Director of ISA's Coordinating Staff for NSC and Collateral Activities. According to Wade's note on the interoffice control sheet attached to the source text, there was a discussion at the Planning Group luncheon on July 5 of the military problems connected with intervention in Vietnam. During the course of the discussion, the Department of Defense was asked to make a study of the consequences of a naval blockade of North Vietnam.

[2] See footnote 2, Document 51, and Document 42.

provision of MAP support for the Vietnamese Junk Force in order to improve the protection against infiltration by sea.

The Task Force Report also indicates that "it will be necessary for CINCPAC's naval component to assume an active responsibility jointly with the Vietnamese for coastal patrol activities from the Cambodian border to the mouth of the Mekong River." Increased guerrilla activities may warrant such additional U.S. efforts as indicated above. These air and naval operations against North Viet Nam would be, in a sense, our equivalent of the guerrilla operations which the Viet Minh are conducting in South Viet Nam.

It is requested that your views on the foregoing be made available by 11 August 1961.

William P. Bundy [3]

[3] Printed from a copy that bears this stamped signature.

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100. Memorandum From Robert W. Komer of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) [1]

Washington, July 20, 1961.

SUBJECT

Are We Pushing Hard Enough in South Vietnam?

Nolting's cable, [2] despite some optimism, is basically disturbing. While it may simply be too early to tell, we do not yet have things turned around in Vietnam. In part this reflects one of the real problems for any government—how to get adequate follow-through. We whack up a big exercise on a crash problem, take some strong initiatives, and then the agencies tend to slip back toward business as usual with only the White House providing much of a prod.

But more important, there are some strong political reasons for stepping up the momentum in South Vietnam. I believe it very important that this government have a major anti-Communist victory to its credit in the six months before the Berlin crisis is likely to get really hot. Few things would be better calculated to show

[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series. Secret.

[2] Document 92.

Moscow and Peiping that we mean business than an obvious (if not yet definitive) turnaround in Vietnam. Moreover, here the odds are still in our favor, which makes Vietnam a better place than Laos to achieve the desired result.

Such a victory is also indispensable to the process of reassuring our Far East allies, most of whom have been led by Laos to wonder whether we have the moxie to protect them any longer.

What should we do? How about the President directing that all wraps are off in the counter-guerrilla operations, etc. in South Vietnam? We will fund and pay for any crash measures, however wasteful, which will produce quick results. We will do anything needed in sending arms and ammunition, providing MAAG advisers, and in associated social and economic operations designed to win back the country side. The objective—to achieve before the end of the year a major defeat of the Viet Cong.

The important thing would be a change in operational philosophy. Instead of haggling with Diem over who should finance what proportion of the effort, *we would regard this as a wartime situation in which the sky's the limit.* The only caveat would be that outlays must be related to the counter-guerrilla campaign. Hence, we would not give Diem a blank check on economic development or on building up the regular army for defense of the 17th parallel as McGarr would have us do.

What would it cost? Even with a blank check, could we spend more than $100 million or so extra in Vietnam over the next six months? Moreover, if such a really crash effort were feasible, it would probably be a sound investment in the long run. To let the counter-guerrilla operations drag on over the years might well involve a far greater total cost to us than that involved in moving fast now. Of course, the gut question is feasibility; could South Vietnam absorb and utilize quickly enough another great infusion of funds? Could we actually get more GVN forces into the field? At least let's look into it.

Simultaneously, we must put the blocks to Diem on finally doing the necessary to regain popular support. Nolting concludes that he *must* undertake such measures within the next few months or face the prospect either of a military coup or a civil war. We must somehow impress Diem with a sufficient sense of crisis to move faster than he is.

Perhaps the above package would provide a lever for the President to personally impress on Diem that (1) latter is being caught up in a desperate crisis in which his very survival is at stake; (2) we are now prepared to pull out all the stops in providing anything necessary to meet this threat promptly and vigorously; but (3) the time has come when he too must undertake the massive and

dynamic reform program without which the countryside cannot be won.

What do we lose if such an initiative fails? Are we any worse off than before? Our prestige may have become a little more heavily engaged but what else? And the risk involved if we fail to prevent the Viet Cong threat from developing into a full-fledged civil war is clearly overriding. After Laos, and with Berlin on the horizon, we cannot afford to go less than all-out in cleaning up South Vietnam.

Bob K.

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101. Memorandum From the Secretary of Defense's Assistant for Special Operations (Lansdale) to the President's Military Representative (Taylor) [1]

Washington, July 21, 1961

SUBJECT

Vietnam Force Increase

This is in response to your query about the 100,000-man increase requested by the President of Vietnam for the Vietnamese Armed Forces. The matter is under study in Defense now, at staff levels. Since it hasn't been before the Secretary or the JCS for a determination, the most helpful thing to you might be to see some of the staff considerations. After discussing this with Deputy Secretary Gilpatric, I obtained some of the thinking in Defense on this subject and am passing it along to you, informally, prior to a substantive Defense position. The two staff officers most concerned with this subject are Col. Kent in ISA and Col. Levy in the Joint Staff.

Force Levels

Increases in Vietnam's force levels have been discussed as being in three phases. Based on an authorized level of 150,000, the phases were increases of 20,000 (to 170,000), 30,000 (to 200,000), and concurrently the 100,000 (adding to the 170,000 to make 270,000). The only approved increase, to date, was the 20,000.

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-e27-71. Top Secret. Signed "Ed". Initialed by Taylor with the notation "To SE Asia file." Copies were sent to McNamara and Gilpatric.

Although authorized strength of the RVNAF (Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces) was 150,000, funds were never provided for this size force by either the U.S. or Vietnam. So, the force level in fact was approximately 142,000. When the 20,000 increase was approved, the Vietnamese started building up their force. They have now reached approximately 150,000. Inductions are at the rate of about 4,000 per month, in addition to about 2,000 conscripts and volunteers each month to offset normal attrition. It is estimated that the 20,000 increase won't be absorbed until December 1961.

The second phase, an increase of 30,000 (170,000 to 200,000) has received careful consideration by JCS and CINCPAC. Both agreed in principle that the increase would probably be required but withheld outright approval subject to continuing assessment of the situation in Vietnam, the training of the 20,000 increase, including officers and NCO's and the use made of these additional personnel. If the continued assessment indicates further increases up to 200,000 are required, the decision should be made in time to permit the second phase to smoothly follow the first without interruption in the induction of personnel. Estimates of the time required to field this 30,000 increase range from 8 to 18 months, due to the many uncontrollable factors involved. It is likely that a year's time will be involved. During this period there will be ample time to assess the requirement for a further additional increase of up to 70,000 making a possible total of 270,000.

Thus, the actual problem of the increase from 200,000 to 270,000 will not be ready for physical solution in Vietnam until about 18 months from now. CINCPAC has indicated that he does not think there is the need or justification for such an increase at this time. The feeling is that there are a number of months available, during the build-up to 200,000, to make a continual assessment of the capability of the RVNAF to obtain, train, and use officers and men. A timely and justifiable decision could be made during this period as to the necessity for and size of the increase.

Some Factors

President Diem, Secretary Thuan, and some of the U.S. staff in MAAG–Vietnam are looking for a "breakthrough" of the problem of the current Viet Cong guerrilla threat by the proposed force increases. About 75% of the RVNAF is now required for these operations, with units having had combat missions for many months now (since 1959) without relief nor with a chance to have sorely needed training. They look for sufficient troops to dominate the enemy, liquidate him quickly, and to give a spirited lift to troop

morale and combat effectiveness by rotation of units out of the line for rest and needed training.

Troops have been engaged extensively on operations in which months have now been stretched into years of strain, fatigue, and casualties. Morale and efficiency is lowered as a result. Major Millett, a Medal of Honor man who has just returned from MAAG Vietnam, made a point of this when he talked to the Vietnam Task Force in Washington,[2] underscoring the fact that his Purple Hearts were earned only after fatigue had set in after months of continual combat.

Lack of the prospect of success, of turning the tide, is a dangerous morale problem. It generates the atmosphere in which coups are likely. Added to this is the fact that, in a country where family relationships have deep meaning, there has been an extended separation now of soldiers from their families.

The "breakthrough" is seen as needed to give a sharp set-back to the Communist threat, and to give Vietnam a fighting chance to get set for future rounds with the enemy. The Republic of Vietnam will celebrate the beginning of its seventh year of independence this Fall. It had 8 years of war during the Franco-Vietminh struggle after the fighting of World War II, one year of intense civil strife (during 1954–55), and six years of increasing guerrilla conflict as an independent nation. It is badly in need of a breathing spell.

After the Geneva Accords of 1954, the Communists in North Vietnam modernized and strengthened their armed forces to about 380,000, the largest armed force in Southeast Asia. The threat posed by this force has grown as areas of Laos have fallen to the skillfully combined Pathet Lao-Vietminh forces, opening new routes of movement on the Laos-Vietnam border along the western flank of Vietnam. While coping with the internal problem of Viet Cong insurgency, this external threat cannot be ignored; the Communists have given the external threat added meaning by announcing that an enclave would be opened in South Vietnam for a "Peoples Liberation" government, and have indicated this would be aided by armed force across the border.

The territory of South Vietnam has about 66,000 square miles. About 20% of this is dominated by the Viet Cong, and combat requirements for liquidating the Viet Cong are high. Another 40% has Viet Cong activity, ranging from small hit-and-run guerrilla bands hiding out in jungles and mountains to small teams of subversive agents; in this area, combat requirements are far less. The

[2] The minutes of the July 5 Task Force meeting, during which Millett made his presentation, are in Department of State, Vietnam Working Group Files: Lot 66 D 193, Minutes of TF Meetings.

exact combat requirements are not precisely clear, but certainly appear to be beyond present capabilities. As the Civil Guard and the Self-Defense forces are improved, as the RVNAF forces are increased, the "breakthrough" might well occur before the 270,000 level is reached.

One facet of the force increase problem is the availability of Officers and NCOs. There is some shortage now. The demand for high quality leadership will be sharpened as troop strengths are increased. Training centers are reported to be crowded and there are many problems growing out of the difficulty to provide trainers without placing unacceptable demands on operational units.

The arithmetic of force increases has been based largely on divisions, (with the division being "papa and mama" to its regiments, battalions, and companies however they are detached for combat assignments). An RVNAF force of 270,000 is essentially a 15 division force. It would permit 2 more divisions in the Northern Corps area, 3 more in the Central Corps area, one more in the South, and two in the General Reserve.

It is believed that four divisions are required to provide adequate delay and the defense potential envisioned in the Hue-Danang (Tourane) area, and to conduct effective counter-insurgency operations (reportedly 8,000 Montagnards are being trained in North Vietnam and Laos for guerrilla operations in the High Plateau of South Vietnam, and there are records of 700 infiltrators per month). The fall of Laos has placed Route #9 in Communist hands, which flanks this area and gives the RVNF commander the task of delaying from both North and West, and then conducting the defense of Danang.

The High Plateau area is critical and the key terrain in the defense of South Vietnam. This area is vulnerable to attack by forces from a Pathet Lao controlled flanking position, in the Plateau de Bolovens of Laos on the West and Northwest, by forces from the East and Northeast by-passing Danang, and by infiltration. Enemy forces attaining control of the High Plateau area are in a position to drive South to the final objective of Saigon. Four divisions are believed required to secure this area against overt or covert attack.

The East coastal plain, south of the Hue-Danang area, requires one division to secure the Cam Ranh Bay and Nha Trang area against attack from the North and West and to provide the nucleus for determined defense in this area in case the High Plateau is lost. This division should provide surveillance, protection of lines of communications, conduct counter-insurgency operations and reinforce other areas as required. It should be assigned to the Corps controlling units on the High Plateau.

To conduct the defense and counterinsurgency operations in the Saigon-Delta area requires four divisions. The General Reserve would also initially be positioned in this area. A General Reserve of one division plus the division-equivalent Airborne Brigade would also be stationed initially in the Saigon area. Additional forces may be available from other areas or from the General Reserve if any enemy attack progressed to a degree of providing a major threat.

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102. Paper Prepared by the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) [1]

Washington, July 21, 1961.

EVALUATION OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FORCES IN VIET-NAM

The battle in Viet-Nam evidently hangs in balance. Positive and negative forces are at work. Since the negative forces will almost certainly increase in weight, it is time to act energetically to increase the strength of the positive forces.

Positive Forces.

These are the positive forces as they can be perceived at this distance.

—A degree of tactical success achieved by the GVN armed forces, e.g., in suppressing the Viet Cong election offensive, in conducting the delta sweep, in the ambush of July 16, in generally moving over to a more offensive posture.

—The reassurance of Diem and his government of continued U.S. support, despite events in Laos.

—The slow beginning of decentralized order in the army and in intelligence collection.

—The increased international awareness of the aggression being conducted against Diem from Hanoi.

Taken together, these forces have held the line—but no more—in recent months.

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Regional Security Series, Southeast Asia—Rostow Report Second Try. Secret.

Negative Forces.

—The almost certain build-up of Viet Cong forces in recent months, looking towards an expanded offensive.

—The build-up of the Viet Cong base in Southern Laos, evidently designed to increase the military pressure on Viet-Nam in the months ahead.

—The continued insecurity of the population and their unwillingness to take the risks of denying food and intelligence to the Viet Cong, and of supplying it to the Viet-Nam cities and Diem's government, respectively.

—The threat of rice shortage in the Viet-Nam cities.

—The persistence of pockets of serious disaffection in the officer corps of Diem's army and the apathy and fatigue of many of his soldiers.

—Diem's inability to link himself and his government with popular aspirations, including the weakness of his programs of village development and civic action.

—The lack of a program of positive national goals and purposes the negative, anti-Communist stance of Diem's political appeal.

W. W. R. [2]

[2] Printed from a copy that bears these typed initials.

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103. Circular Telegram From the Department of State to Certain Diplomatic Missions [1]

Washington, July 22, 1961—2:31 p.m.

138. Press recently reported certain remarks by Senator Fulbright re aid to SEA and Korea. [2] For your guidance in handling inquiries these remarks were part of repeated questioning by Senator Ful-

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 790.5-MSP/7-2261. Confidential. Drafted by Claxton (H) and Sweezy (FE/SEA), cleared with S/S and with Usher (FE/SEA) and Cleveland (FE/SEA), initialed by Peterson (FE) for the Secretary, and sent to Bangkok, CINCPAC for PolAd, Manila, Phnom Penh, Djakarta, Saigon, Seoul, Taipei, and Vientiane.

[2] Apparently a reference to Fulbright's remarks during testimony by Secretary Rusk before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on July 6, a transcript of which is in the National Archives, RG 46, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Records, and which is printed in *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series)*, Vol. XIII, Part 2 (Washington, 1984), pp. 327–376.

bright to make certain new Administration has fully reviewed principles and objectives underlying military and economic aid to SEA and to Korea and that proposals new aid program are based on fresh appraisal as distinguished from carrying out old policies from inertia only. Fulbright asked Secretary to return to Committee for full discussion this subject. Secretary did so and provided vigorous assertion of importance continued assistance to SEA and Korea based on re-examination underlying policies and objectives. Secretary firmly supported continuance of fundamental US policies in area and of full amount of funds requested. Because Secretary's testimony was given at special meeting and dealt with Berlin and many other problems none of it was printed. Therefore the responses of Executive Branch firmly supporting the SEA and FE programs will not appear in printed hearings. However, upshot of this questioning is that after re-examination fundamental policies are continued.

FYI. Fulbright also made point aid alone is not solution to SEA or FE problems. Fulbright requested Dept memorandum indicating re-examination. Dept prepared and submitted memorandum underscoring importance of assistance to SEA for protection independence against communist pressures from without and within.[3] Tone of Fulbright's questions suggests real concern about possible overcommitment of US and it is not clear that Executive answers completely satisfied him. However rest of Committee seems in accord with basic policies. End FYI.

Pouching text hearings and copy Dept memo.[4]

Rusk

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[3] Apparently a reference to the paper prepared by the Policy Planning Council entitled "U.S. Security Alternatives in the Far East," an early draft of which was dated June 23. A copy of this paper, with a note on the table of contents page to the effect that the views of the Policy Planning Council were "advisory" and did not necessarily represent approved policy and with a cover sheet dating the paper July 24, and designating it PPC 61–4, was sent to U. Alexis Johnson by McGhee under cover of a note of July 31. McGhee explained that the attached paper had been approved by McConaughy and the Secretary and had been sent to Senator Fulbright on July 21, in response to Fulbright's request during the course of Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings on foreign aid. (Department of State, S/S–NSC Files: Lot 70 D 265)

[4] In telegram 128 from Saigon, July 27, Nolting reported that Fulbright's remarks as recently reported in the press caused President Diem and other Vietnamese officials "great concern." Diem voiced his concern in a meeting with Nolting on July 24. Nolting told the Department that circular telegram 138 helped him place Fulbright's remarks in some perspective for Diem, but that he had been handicapped by not having the text of the Senator's remarks nor specific information on the press coverage of the remarks. (*Ibid.*, Central Files, 790.5–MSP/7–2761)

104. Memorandum From the President's Military Representative (Taylor) to the President [1]

Washington, July 26, 1961.

SUBJECT

Southeast Asian Planning

1. In continuing my examination of the need for increasing the South Vietnamese Army in line with President Diem's request of June 9, [2] I have become increasingly aware of the need for a rational analysis of the need for military forces in Laos and Thailand, as well as in Vietnam.

2. The immediate military danger to Vietnam as well as to its neighbors derives from the continued infiltration from the North into the Laotian panhandle and over the western border of Vietnam. There is no present military plan in existence which is adequate to cope with this threat. SEATO 5 [3] is a military plan designed primarily to hold Vientiane, Seno and several other important population centers. It offers no response to the continued attrition being carried on by the irregular invaders into Laos and Vietnam.

3. The Royal Laotian Army (FAL), with or without the Meos, is inadequate to cope with this threat. You are aware of the program to improve the quality of the FAL which is being carried forward presently by the MAAG in Laos. However, all of the reports which I have seen suggest that many months of intensive work will be necessary to make this force truly combat-worthy. Even if it becomes so, its strength and resources are not sufficient to cope unassisted with the infiltration.

4. Without suggesting a reduction of effort in North Laos, my feeling is that a prime military requirement is the early establishment of a secure base in the south of Laos, capable of covering the flank of South Vietnam and capable of providing a point of support for operations in the North. Such a base can be secured only through the cooperative action of Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, assisted and encouraged by the United States.

5. Action to pull these countries together in coordinated action should be accompanied by a continuation of our efforts to improve

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Regional Security Series, Southeast Asia-General Secret. No drafting or clearance information is given on the source text. Copies were sent to Bundy (presumably McGeorge), Lemnitzer, U. Alexis Johnson, Rostow, Robert Kennedy, and Steeves.

[2] See footnote 3, Document 69.

[3] Reference is to Plan 5/61, "A Plan To Assist the Royal Laotian Government To Counter Communist Insurgency in Laos," (MS/623/1/61), April 20, 1961. (National Archives and Records Service, RG 333, SEATO Registry Microfilm, Reel S-3-61)

the Laotian Army. Following agreement as to the role which the military and paramilitary forces of these countries would play in establishing this base, the United States can then see more clearly the kind of military aid programs which are necessary and appropriate in this region. In other words, to answer the question of the future size of the Vietnamese Army, we need a strategic plan for the entire Southeast Asian area.

6. These comments add up to a reinforcement of Mr. Rostow's terminal point in his Memorandum to you of July 25,[4] that we need a tightly knit Southeast Asia task force to pull these complex issues together and to submit recommended solutions to the same Steering Group which is watching the Berlin situation. I have passed this paper to Mr. Steeves who is preparing the basic State position on a Southeast Asia program.

Maxwell D. Taylor[5]

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[4] Not found.
[5] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

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105. Memorandum From Edwin F. Black of the Office of the Secretary of Defense to the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow)[1]

Washington, July 27, 1961

SUBJECT

The Situation in South Vietnam

This memorandum is to provide you with answers to certain questions which you raised during your conversation with Mr. Gilpatric on 26 July.[2]

1. Is it a fact that 90% of Diem's forces are committed to counter-insurgency actions?

Gen. McGarr and the MAAG staff who are intimately familiar with the day-to-day deployments of the RVNAF units confirm that

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series. Confidential. No drafting or clearance information is on the source text.
[2] No other record of the Rostow–Gilpatric conversation has been found.

this is the case. A glance at their latest order of battle map[3] indicates how dispersed Vietnamese units are. Gen. Khanh, Chief of Staff, RVNAF, stated that this was a fact when he briefed both the U.S. and the Vietnamese Special Financial Groups the latter part of July 1961. Everything I saw during my fairly extensive travels throughout the country and during conversations with MAAG officers in the field led me to believe that the 90% figure was reasonably accurate.

2. What is Diem's plan for using the additional 30,000 troops?

The additional 30,000 troops are needed to create two additional infantry divisions and minimum supporting air, naval and logistic units. These forces will be employed primarily to meet the increased threat resulting from the deteriorating situation in Laos. This includes the stepped-up infiltration of Viet-Cong supplies and guerrilla forces across the southern Laos border, as well as the very real threat of flanking attacks from north Vietnam which might strike eastward across Route 9 toward Hue and into the Kontum–Pleiku area further to the south. It should be remembered that as of July 1961 President Diem only had two regiments in general reserve to protect his country in event of an overt military attack. As indicated above, all the rest of his forces are deployed on counter-insurgency actions.

3. Are there sufficient manpower resources to permit an increase in the GVN force level to 200,000?

The Manpower Division of MAAG states that there are and that it is entirely feasible for the GVN to call up additional forces at the rate of 5,000 men per month. The problem of providing adequate officer and NCO cadres for these additional forces is to be met by a revision in the draft law which will permit the induction of adequate numbers of high school graduates and first and second-year college students. Secretary of State Thuan informed us in President Diem's presence that these proposed changes in the existing draft legislation were now on his desk and would be presented to the President for his approval in the immediate future. The GVN is well aware of the need to administer the draft intelligently so that key personnel needed in essential civilian capacities (for example, doctors which are in short supply) will not be absorbed into the Army to the detriment of the normal life of the country.

4. Is President Diem taking vigorous measures to carry out the essential administrative and organizational reforms needed to effectively pursue a successful counter-insurgency plan?

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[3] No copy of this map has been found.

CINCPAC on 22 July responded affirmatively to this question—citing various specific steps which have been undertaken by the GVN since May to implement the recommendations contained in the U.S. counter-insurgency plan.[4] These include implementation of a territorial and command re-organization plan, organization of a central intelligence organization, establishment of an improved military chain of command, redeployment of RVNAF units as recommended in the CIP. The effectiveness of these measures is borne out by the recent successful and fairly large scale operations against the Viet-Cong which have taken place within the last several weeks.

Black

[4] See Document 1.

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106. Memorandum From Robert H. Johnson of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow)[1]

Washington, July 27, 1961.

SUBJECT

The 30,000 Man Increase in Vietnamese Armed Forces

I understand that Col. Black, Cottrell and Staley are coming to talk to you at noon today about your questions yesterday to Mr. Gilpatric.[2] This memo is prepared as a checklist of the points that might be discussed.[3]

1. *In general* we believe that the President should have a comprehensive analysis of the basis on which the recommendations will be made to him for the 30,000 man increase. This analysis should be more than a *formal* military justification. Specifically, with respect to:

2. *Military aspects.* We would like a military analysis which covers such matters as the following:

a. The formal statement of mission of the added forces includes, I believe, dealing with the possibility of a major North Vietnamese

[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Secret.

[2] See *supra*.

[3] No record of the July 27 meeting among Rostow, Black, Cottrell, and Staley has been found.

attack. Is this necessary? Isn't the U.S. sure to intervene in such a situation? Would GVN forces really be needed for delaying purposes?

b. What will be the true missions of the added forces—how will they be actually employed? What kind of training will they get? Will they be anti-guerilla units?

c. Does the U.S. government really accept the judgment that about 90 per cent of GVN combat forces are committed to counter-insurgency operations? For example, does the term "counter-insurgency operations" in this context include protection of the position of various political leaders? (I do not argue that some of this may not be necessary.)

d. At what rate do we expect the already approved 20,000 man buildup to proceed? Will it really go as fast as presently estimated (completion by end of CY 1961)?

e. Do we need parallel action by the U.S. and the GVN to ensure completion of a comprehensive, geographically-phased military plan for dealing with the VC?

3. *Economic Aspects.* We would like an analysis of the effect of the proposed increase in *real* terms upon the Vietnamese economy to supplement the analysis of the *financial* impact made in the Staley report.

4. *Political Aspects.* The President ought to be provided with the political assessment called for by the recommendations in the original VN Task Force Report which he approved. A political assessment was provided by Nolting sometime ago.[4] If State accepts this as an adequate assessment, it should do the job.

Bob

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[4] Presumably a reference to Document 92.

107. Memorandum From the President's Military Representative (Taylor) and the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President [1]

Washington, July 27, 1961.

SUBJECT

Issues for Decision—Southeast Asia Meeting, Friday, July 28

1. We do not know precisely what the Secretary will present on the basis of the paper being written by Mr. Steeves. [2] Following, however, is our view of the issues which will arise for your decision.

2. *A Choice of Strategy.* We must choose an integrated strategy for the entire area because the position in Southeast Asia is precarious: Laos could be lost to Communist control; the Viet-Cong offensive could overwhelm South Viet-Nam; Thailand could slide toward an ambiguous neutralism; Cambodia could despair of maintaining its neutrality. In the face of this situation we must choose among three broad strategies:

—to disengage from the area as gracefully as possible;

—to find as soon as possible a convenient political pretext and attack with American military force the regional source of aggression in Hanoi; or

—to build as much indigenous military, political and economic strength as we can in the area, in order to contain the thrust from Hanoi while preparing to intervene with U.S. military force if the Chinese Communists come in or the situation otherwise gets out of hand.

We assume it is the policy of this Administration to pursue the third strategy; but some discussion of the alternatives may be useful. In any case, as we enter the Southeast Asia planning exercise, you should define your preferred strategy.

3. *Concrete Tactical Issues.* Depending on the degree of development of State's basic paper, the Friday conference will raise a good many concrete issues. Some may be ready for settlement between you and Mr. Rusk; others may be assigned to the new Task Force which is being formed under Mr. Steeves. The major issues as we see them follow.

4. *Laos.* With respect to the Laos Conference, we must decide soon:

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Regional Security Series, Southeast Asia—General 7/25/61-7/28/61. Top Secret.

[2] Not further identified.

—What our sticking point at Geneva shall be and what kind of a Laos Government is minimally acceptable to us.

—In case of a breakdown of the Laos Conference we must decide whether SEATO Plan 5 is an adequate contingency plan. Here there are two questions: the present plan does not provide for the protection of the Laos–Viet-Nam border and the Laos panhandle as a whole; the present plan would attempt to contain a substantial increase in Viet Minh interference in Laos by force applied in the Mekong Valley—it may be wiser to envisage less force in the Mekong Valley and Viet Minh containment via a heavier direct threat to Hanoi, to be applied only if the Viet Minh cross their frontiers in strength.

—Are we to accept a split Laos as an inevitable outcome of the present situation?

5. *Hanoi.* Should we apply increased political pressure on Hanoi by exposing its role in both Laos and South Viet-Nam? If so, how, where and when should it be done?

6. *Viet-Nam.*

—How shall we respond to the Staley Report,[3] including the commitment to expand Diem's forces up to 200,000 in the next eighteen months? The decision on the force increase should be made prior to September 1.

—Shall we send a military review mission to Viet-Nam? If so, when?

—What should be our attitude toward use of Viet-Nam forces in Laos?

7. *Thailand.*

—What kind of military and economic assistance program, in addition to that recently authorized in a message to Ambassador Young,[4] should we mount in Thailand?

—What do we want from Thailand in blocking further guerrilla infiltration into Laos?

8. *Cambodia.*

—How can we exploit Sihanouk's present more worried mood to increase Cambodian cooperation with Viet-Nam and Thailand? Should we invite Sihanouk to Washington?

9. *Contingency Planning.*

—What kind of contingency plan should we have should Khrushchev radically expand Communist aggression in Southeast Asia during the Berlin crisis?

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[3] Not printed, but see Document 93.

[4] Not further identified.

108. Memorandum From the Chairman of the Southeast Asia Task Force (Steeves) to the President[1]

Washington, July 28, 1961.

SUBJECT

Southeast Asia Task Force Interim Report

Your Task Force on Southeast Asia is engaged in a preliminary review of our policy for the Southeast Asia peninsula which includes Thailand, Viet-Nam, Laos and Cambodia. The object of our study is to devise a course of action to arrest communist encroachment into that area. The consensus, on a preliminary examination of the problem, brings us to the following conclusions:

1. It is essential to our policy interests in Asia, and indeed globally, to ensure the security of Southeast Asia against further communist advancement, whether communist strategy takes the form of political take-over or whether they intend to accomplish the task by covert or overt military means.

2. We should make the basic decision now to resist this encroachment by appropriate military means, if necessary, with or without unanimous SEATO support. The loss of Southeast Asia to the free world would be highly inimical to our future strategy and interest.

3. Any approach to the solution of this problem must entail a coordinated package approach involving the entire peninsula if the action is to be effective. It must encompass appropriate political, economic, psychological and military measures.

4. We recognize the DRV as the immediate focal point of the threat to the peninsula and whatever action is taken should bear on this objective if both Laos and Viet-Nam are to be secured and the approaches to the rest of the peninsula blocked.

5. A strategy and concept to accomplish our purposes contains the following ingredients:

a. At Geneva, our delegation should be instructed that the "sticking point" in our negotiations be our insistence on an effective, well-equipped ICC with adequate terms of reference as the minimum price we will demand for our military disengagement in Laos. This must not be made dependent on the uncertain effectiveness of

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Regional Security Series, Southeast Asia—General 7/25/61–7/28/61. Secret. No drafting or clearance information is given on the source text. A typewritten, undated, and unsigned note attached to the source text reads as follows: "This was brought to the meeting by Mr. Steeves, and discussed with the President by Mr. Steeves and Mr. Johnson." The meeting under reference is apparently the one recorded in the memorandum of discussion, *infra*.

any future RLG for the security of the entire peninsula must not be left dependent on the traditionally weak RLG, incapable of stemming communist aggression after the pattern of the past twelve years.

b. In Laos, our policy will be to keep a steady rein on the RLG, simultaneously encouraging it not to agree to the formation of a coalition government that would merely be a prelude to communist take-over.

c. Training and support of the FAL in and out of Laos will continue in a moderately increasing tempo to place that force in as good a posture as possible to resist any possible breach of the cease-fire or contain the Pathet Lao offensive.

d. While we will continue to encourage negotiation for a genuinely neutral Laos under proper safeguards, we will be prepared to support a divided Laos under a non-communist government rather than accept a so-called unified Laos under a communist-oriented government with an inadequate control commission resulting from failure to arrive at a suitable agreement in Geneva.

e. Give early indication to Thailand that we stand ready to take appropriate measures diplomatically, militarily and economically to strengthen her position. In Thailand's present disillusioned and somewhat discouraged state, it is essential that her cooperation be insured. Thailand's strategic position, quite apart from other considerations, makes her a key to any adequate Southeast Asia position.

f. In Viet-Nam we accept as general guidance the outline of the Staley report for improving the economic and military situation in Viet-Nam.

g. In carrying out our programs based in Viet-Nam covert action be conducted to interdict North Vietnamese pressure on South Viet-Nam and, if these contacts do not prove successful, eventually give overt indication that the continuation of DRV aggressive policy towards Laos and Viet-Nam may result in direct retaliatory action against her.

h. Inasmuch as existing military plans have concentrated on the SEATO Plan Five type of operation in Laos [and?] do not seem adequate for this present strategy, a military plan be devised with or without SEATO concurrence but obviously include as many members of SEATO as possible to coordinate military action in Viet-Nam and Laos directed at the reduction of the threat based in the DRV should all efforts at a peaceful settlement fail.

109. Memorandum of a Discussion, The White House, Washington, July 28, 1961, 11 a.m.[1]

PRESENT

The President, Secretary Rusk, Mr. Johnson, Mr. McConaughy, Mr. Steeves, Mr. Cottrell, General Taylor, Mr. Bundy, Mr. Rostow, Mr. Ball

The meeting was opened by Mr. Johnson, who explained that Southeast Asia, in the current context, meant Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia.

Summarizing the current situation, Mr. Johnson remarked that the Communists show no sign of wanting a neutral Laos. Our estimate is that they are very confident about the current military situation and see no reason for concessions. Thus, the question for us is whether we can introduce a new element which will change their estimate of the situation. Without such a change, it is most unlikely that there will be any agreement in Geneva.

Our position is that two elements are required for a satisfactory Laotian settlement: a strong ICC and a government which gives real promise of avoiding Communist domination. Without these two conditions, Laos will pose an increasing threat to South Vietnam. Our situation in that country is not improving. The Vietnamese are killing members of the Viet-Cong in significant numbers, but as these losses are inflicted, more are introduced, and we are on a sort of treadmill there.

The question then is whether we can make a coordinated approach to the problem of Southeast Asia. It is not easy, because Southeast Asia is an American geographical expression rather than a political reality. Thailand, Laos and Vietnam have complex relations one with another, and while their present interests are much alike, there are rivalries and differences which make cooperation difficult.

Turning to the political situation in Laos itself, Mr. Johnson reported a lack of progress in negotiations among the three Princes. His Washington visit has apparently stiffened Phoumi's back. (Mr. Johnson thought the stiffening was about right, but the President later expressed reservations.) Meanwhile, SEATO Plan 5 is ready if the cease-fire is broken. . . .

The new element which is now being considered, in working discussions in the U.S. Government, is the creation of a plan to take and hold the southern part of Laos with combined forces of the Royal Laotian Government, Thailand, Vietnam, and the United States. The proposal is that we would press in Geneva for a strong

[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Regional Security Series, Southeast Asia—General. Top Secret.

ICC, making plain that unless such an arrangement is established, the U.S. will not give up its current position in Laos in support of the RLG. At the same time, we would support Phoumi in refusing to accept any government which would be likely to slip under Communist control. If these conditions are not met, and if the cease-fire is broken, we would then go, not for a re-establishment of the status quo, but for a strong new position, as described, in Southern Laos.

In response to a question from the Secretary of State, Mr. Johnson stated that his proposal did not exclude a Laotian Government with some members of the Pathet Lao in it. The point was, rather, how many, and in what Cabinet positions, and later there was agreement to a suggestion from Mr. Steeves that it is time now to begin discussing particular names in particular posts. Mr. Johnson continued that whatever the Government, the character and powers of the ICC are of central importance.

It was further made clear that if we were unable to agree to proposals made in Geneva and if we should support the Lao Government in a parallel position, we would nevertheless continue to talk and would not ourselves be the agents to break up the conference.

[Here follows a paragraph on the internal political situation in Laos.]

It was evident from this same gloomy view that the working party had turned to a consideration of a new military alternative. One part of this alternative plan, as explained above, is the notion of a capture of Southern Laos. The second part, Mr. Johnson explained, is the possibility of responding in a new way to any substantial intervention by the Viet-minh. The force proposed for Southern Laos would probably be able to cope with any Pathet Lao force that might be placed against it. Previously it had been supposed that if the Viet-minh should intervene, any additional action would have to be located in Laos. Now there was discussion of the possibility of meeting any such substantial intervention by the Viet-minh with a direct air and naval operation at Haiphong or Hanoi. And possibly you can deter any such attack in Laos by making clear that there are circumstances in which you would take this more energetic course. Questions from the President showed that the detailed aspects of this military plan had not been developed. It was not clear how great an effect action against Haiphong or Hanoi would have on Northern Viet-nam, nor whether it would be easy to hold what had been taken in a single attack. Similarly, no careful plan has yet been developed for an operation to take and hold Southern Laos. Planning is proceeding, and General Taylor is in close touch with General Lemnitzer. But the President made clear his own deep concern with the need for realism and accuracy in such military

planning. He had observed in earlier military plans with respect to Laos that optimistic estimates were invariably proven false in the event. He was not persuaded that the airfields and the existing situation in Southern Laos would permit any real operation to save that part of the country, and he emphasized the reluctance of the American people and of many distinguished military leaders to see any direct involvement of U.S. troops in that part of the world. In reply it was urged that with a proper plan, with outside support, and above all with a clear and open American commitment, the results would be very different from anything that had happened before. But the President remarked that General de Gaulle, out of painful French experience, had spoken with feeling of the difficulty of fighting in this part of the world.

A relevant element in military planning of any sort is the financial stringency which is pressing the British to reduce their military commitments east of Suez. The current Cabinet order is that this reduction be on the order of 35 million pounds a year. The British, in any event, will be most reluctant to participate in any broader scheme of the kind which is now under discussion.

Another related element is the problem of international opinion with respect to the situation in Viet-nam. It would greatly improve our position if the world could understand more clearly what in fact is happening there. In particular, any landing operations in Northern Viet-nam would be much more likely to escape from international condemnation if world opinion understands the character of the attack which is now being mounted from the north against Diem. One grave question here is whether certain kinds of information available to the United States should on balance be brought to the surface and placed before the United Nations. This matter is still under study.

Mr. Johnson made it plain that no decision was being sought at this meeting, but that it would be most helpful in planning if it could be understood that the President would at some future time have a willingness to decide to intervene if the situation seemed to him to require it.

The President in reply offered no decision, but he made it very plain that he himself is at present very reluctant to make a decision to go into Laos. He believed that the negotiations in Geneva should be pressed forward, that we should not get ourselves badly separated from the British, that the American people were not eager to get into Laos, that nothing would be worse than an unsuccessful intervention in this area, and that he did not yet have confidence in the military practicability of the proposal which had been put before him; though he was eager to have it studied more carefully. The Secretary of State then turned the discussion to the economics of the situation.

He thought it important not ever to tell the President that any active military intervention would be cheap, and he pointed out that by comparison other instruments were very inexpensive indeed, and that we ought to examine what we might do in Southeast Asia if there were no budgetary limitation upon the use of such other instruments. Saving Southeast Asia would be worth a lot of money and doing it without U.S. forces would be worth a lot more. Discussion then turned to the Staley report on Vietnam, and the President agreed to the general line of argument presented by Mr. Ball. (Mr. Ball's argument was drawn from a memorandum of the Secretary of State to the President, which is attached to this record.)[2] Mr. Ball also discussed briefly a plan for a line of credit to Thailand proposed by Ambassador Young, and the President emphasized that long-term credits of this sort should not be publicly discussed during the debate on foreign aid.

Returning to the military problems, the President emphasized the need for more accurate assessment of the situation in the future. He indicated that it would be wise for anyone making current military recommendations to examine the fate of earlier assessments. He indicated his hope that someone well known to him could go out and look at the situation directly, and while there might be arguments against having General Taylor in Laos, it emerged in the discussion that it might be good for him to go to Vietnam and to learn what he could about the whole situation from that area. General Taylor proposed to look first at the problem itself to make clear what facts need to be checked.

In summary, the President proposed the following five courses of action:

1. We should be closely on top of the conference in Geneva. He would like a weekly report of progress on that front.

2. There would be continued effort to frame a satisfactory government. If we could get an arrangement with the King in the lead, so much the better. Actual names and numbers of the players would now be discussed.

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[2] This memorandum, dated July 28, summarizes the Staley Report recommendations and their probable costs and concludes:

"It is recognized that Congress has cut aid funds at a time when additional demands are increasing. Cuts are particularly acute in Supporting Assistance ($131 million cut in Senate and $100 million in House) and the Contingency Fund ($200 million cut in each House) from which the bulk of the Viet-Nam program and additions thereto will derive. Nevertheless I believe that the critical situation in Southeast Asia warrants priority in proceeding with the program in the report. It will promote the internal and external security of Viet-Nam. It will strengthen the Government, especially in its relations with the rural population. It will bring this larger part of the population more securely within the nation. It will help Viet-Nam move toward a self-sustaining economy. Finally, it will demonstrate our own solidarity with South East Asia."

3. He was willing to accept the recommendations of the Staley report, but without a present commitment of precise amounts of money over a precise period of time.

4. The military proposals put forward by the working group will be closely examined, in the light of the criticisms and reservations expressed above. One particular aspect of these proposals is whether they would have an impact upon Vietnamese force ceilings.

5. The President hopes to have a recommendation soon as to who might go out and check the important points of fact relevant to these plans on the ground.

McGeorge Bundy

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110. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President [1]

Washington, July 29, 1961.

General Taylor and I have put our heads together and agreed the following list of questions a military mission to Southeast Asia might answer.

1. At the present time are the Vietnamese losing ground, holding their ground, or gaining ground in the war against the Viet Cong?

2. When are the Vietnamese likely to produce a plan for the systematic elimination of the Viet Cong—they are allegedly now at work on such a plan, and what ideas, if any, does our MAAG have about what such a systematic plan should look like?

3. How far forward is the administration of the Viet-Nam army on general staff lines?

4. How far forward is the organization of a central intelligence system capable of acquiring and using information from the villages?

5. Does the present disposition of Vietnamese forces and the planned disposition of the extra 20,000 and the extra 30,000 make sense?

6. What are the possibilities of offensive action by Diem's forces against North Viet-Nam.

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Regional Security Series, Southeast Asia—General. Top Secret.

(1) By air drops?
(2) By coastal raids?

What would be Diem's attitude to such a program supported by U.S.?

7. What would be the effect upon Viet-Nam troop requirements if Diem were encouraged to push out into Laos in order to control infiltration routes? Would Diem be willing to join in a cooperative action with Laos and Thailand to clean up the panhandle of Laos?

8. What are the bottlenecks which retard the increase in the strength of the Vietnamese Army? Is everything being done to eliminate them?

9. Is the counter-guerrilla training adequate which is being conducted? Do we have the necessary U.S. Special Forces personnel on the job?

10. Is the MAAG adequate in size, quality of personnel and leadership to meet the requirements implicit in the programmed expansion of the Vietnamese Army?

11. In view of the area approach which is being taken at the planning level here, I would think that any military mission to Viet-Nam should include a visit to Laos and Thailand. What we are trying to determine are the realities in the military situation. In particular, we want to know whether the necessary cooperative military action between Laos, Viet-Nam and Thailand can be put together in time to control the situation on the ground. We are inclined to think that it would be a good rather than a bad diplomatic move for an American military mission to visit Southeast Asia.

Until we are farther along in our present area planning we think it premature to send a mission. Undoubtedly new questions will be arising which we do not think of now. On the other hand the rainy season will soon be over; and our ducks should then be in a row

111. Memorandum From the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) [1]

JCSM-518-61 *Washington, August 3, 1961*

SUBJECT

Increase of GVN Armed Forces to 270,000

1. Reference is made to the memorandum by the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) dated 10 July 1961, [2] subject as above, requesting the Joint Chiefs of Staff to submit recommendations on increasing the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) to 270,000.

2. The Joint Chiefs of Staff do not believe that an ultimate force of 270,000 would be required to enable the RVNAF to conduct counterinsurgency operations and concurrently be prepared to meet overt aggression.

3. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are of the opinion that for the foreseeable future the force objectives for Vietnam of a nine division equivalent force (200,000) is adequate. The Joint Chiefs of Staff will continue to assess the Government of Vietnam (GVN) and RVNAF capabilities and will be prepared to recommend increases in the force objectives for Vietnam should circumstances indicate there is a requirement.

4. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that:

a. The strategic force objectives for Vietnam remain at the nine division equivalent force level (200,000), subject to future assessment.

b. Priority efforts be continued to enhance the capabilities of the already authorized 20,000 RVNAF augmentation, 68,000 Civil Guard (CG), 48,000–52,000 Self Defense Corps (SDC) and the rotation and retraining of existing forces.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff.
L.L. Lemnitzer [3]
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, Lansdale Files, FRC 63 A 1803, Forces for Vietnam 1961. Top Secret. Printed also in *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pp. 239–240.

[2] Not found.

[3] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

112. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President [1]

Washington, August 4, 1961.

The staff work in Washington has now been completed on the response to the Report of the Special Financial Group on Viet-Nam (Staley Group) [2] and a letter from you to President Diem has been forwarded for your approval by the attached memorandum from the Acting Secretary of State. [3] I have a few comments on the report itself and on the response to it.

The Staley Report.

Dr. Staley's group has several achievements to its credit. It contributed to the continuing effort to create a more cooperative atmosphere in our relations; it obtained Diem's agreement in principle to de facto devaluation and a single exchange rate for imports of U.S. aid; it reached agreement with the Vietnamese on criteria to govern imports under the U.S.-financed commercial import program; it obtained acceptance by Diem of the desirability of short-range economic impact programs; it obtained some acceptance of the fact that U.S. aid is not the solution to Viet-Nam's local currency financing problems; it laid the basis for continuing consultation on economic matters through parallel committees, and it pressed on Diem the need for long-range economic planning.

But the group was unable to come up with firm estimates or programs and much work remains to be done on the estimates and programs in the report; it did not re-examine the total U.S. aid effort or even the relationship between its own proposals and the existing aid program; it did not get very clear commitments as to the extent and character of the Vietnamese contribution to the total effort. On balance then, the Staley group made an important contribution, but much remains to be done.

The deficiencies of the report have been a source of some difficulty in developing the U.S. response to it. But behind the differences that developed within the Executive Branch over our response was a more basic issue which is a source of continuing debate on various Vietnamese problems. Some agencies (notably

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Secret.

[2] See Document 93.

[3] Neither found attached to the source text. The Acting Secretary's memorandum is apparently the same described in footnote 2, Document 109. The letter from President Kennedy to President Diem is Document 114.

State and Defense) are of the view that we can best achieve Vietnamese action on needed political, military and economic reforms, not by specific conditions on our aid, but by creating a general atmosphere of cooperation and confidence. They believe that the application of this approach during the last six months has produced a significant improvement in Vietnamese performance. They recognize the difficulties with the estimates in the Staley Report, but believe that for psychological reasons we should endorse the report as far as we can now and then get on quickly with the refinement of the estimates and programs.

Other agencies (e.g., Budget and ICA staff levels) stress the need for Vietnamese action if the proposed programs are to succeed and believe that such action is much more likely to be forthcoming if our aid is specifically conditioned upon Vietnamese performance with respect to particular needed reforms. On the basis of past experience they are inclined to be skeptical of the prospects for getting action out of Diem on the basis of an approach which places primary emphasis upon developing a spirit of mutual cooperation. The letter to President Diem represents something of a compromise between these two views, but in general tends toward the first and goes about as far as we reasonably can go in endorsing the Staley Report. The success of the compromise will depend notably on the success of the joint committees in making the criteria stick.

The Letter to President Diem

The most important single commitment in the letter to President Diem is the endorsement of a 30,000 man increase in Vietnamese forces. The Staley Report itself made no recommendation on this subject which was outside its terms of reference. The rationale for this increase is contained on page 4 of the Memorandum from the Acting Secretary of State. (The Ambassador's case on political grounds for the increase is contained in the attached telegram.)[4] Despite persistent efforts we have made, the State Depart...ent's statement of rationale does not cover such important subjects as the extent to which these forces are intended to meet a threat of overt attack from the North as contrasted with the internal threat,[5] how they will be deployed, the kind of training that they will receive, and the specific effects of such a buildup on the

[4] No telegram was found attached to the source text, but this is apparently a reference to Document 92.

[5] The Staley Report contains a Vietnamese estimate that 90 percent of the existing Vietnamese armed forces are committed to the counter-insurgency effort. It is difficult to evaluate this estimate. The U.S. military are inclined to give it general credence. My view is that it involves a somewhat generous definition of "counter-insurgency effort", but I am not prepared from this distance to challenge the present disposition of the Vietnamese order of battle. [Footnote in the source text.]

civilian economy. We lack in Washington the specific information and plans necessary to answer these questions. In particular, we shall need a mutually agreed, geographically-phased strategic plan for dealing with the Viet Cong before we can answer them with assurance. The difficulty in getting this town to answer these questions is one reason I advocate sending the ablest military mission we can muster to the field.

In the light of these ambiguities the letter to Diem suggests the need for a plan and for an understanding on the training and use of the 30,000 additional men before the buildup begins. It was not considered desirable, however, specifically to condition the increase upon such understandings.

The letter contains a general commitment to provide the commercial import program that will be required—provided it can be justified under the seven criteria contained in the report (page 3 of the telegram). The instructions to Ambassador Nolting * that follow the text of the letter would authorize him to say that the increased generation of piasters under the new effective exchange rate will not serve to reduce the U.S. share of the aid effort (last page of the telegram). Since the FY 1962 Congressional presentation provides less than we provided under the FY 1961 program ($95 million v. $115 million), this statement *could* involve a minimum commitment of $20 million aid beyond that contained in the Congressional presentation. The cost table in the memorandum from the Secretary (page 2) uses such a $20 million addition as the bottom end of the range for this program. On the other hand, the commitment might be met through PL 480 or by drawing down the pipeline.

The telegram states that you are directing Mr. Labouisse to conduct through the USOM in Viet-Nam a thorough and expeditious review of the short-range economic program contained in the Staley Report and of related existing U.S. aid projects. The parallel committees are to develop specific longer range development projects.

An important part of the letter and the instructions to the Ambassador is the emphasis upon economic development planning and the related emphasis upon seeking to get Diem to use our new joint economic efforts as a means of projecting to Viet-Nam, its friends and its enemies, an image of a nation confident in its long-range future.

Finally, in accordance with your wishes, the instructions to the Ambassador would have him give added emphasis to the importance we attach to Vietnamese adherence to the seven criteria governing imports and to its commitment to a higher piaster rate of exchange.

* The instructions were transmitted in telegram 140, *infra*.

113. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, August 4, 1961—7:41 p.m.

140. Task Force VN 22. This telegram constitutes the President's instructions for Ambassador Nolting and Task Force Saigon.

The following letter from President Kennedy to President Diem incorporates Task Force Saigon's suggestions in Embtel 145. [2]

Ambassador Nolting is requested to transmit the letter to President Diem at once.

[Here follows the text of the letter from President Kennedy to President Diem, which Nolting delivered to Diem on August 6, *infra*.]

An essential part of Ambassador Nolting's presentation of the President's letter should refer to planning. In order to derive long-range benefits from our joint efforts to win in the present emergency, Viet-Nam needs long-range planning. To develop and carry out a long-range plan, Viet-Nam needs its own planners and the help of experts from outside. In the context of a long-range plan and considering the limitations that the agreed criteria place upon imports, the capital goods component of the commodity aid program can be expanded. It should be made clear that long-range planning and the increase in capacity to absorb capital goods will facilitate the flow of American development assistance. In focusing on such a Plan as an urgent item of current business, the nation can be inspired and consolidated. The U.S. is willing to help the long-range development effort with men and resources, and without diminishing in any way the U.S. support for the present counter-insurgency effort. We hope that one consequence of our new joint efforts will be an effective projection to the nation, its friends and its enemies, of our confidence in a long-range future for an independent Viet-Nam. In this connection, the Ambassador should seek discreetly to impress upon President Diem that he should use the total U.S. program for the greatest political effect in his achievement of maximum appreciation of his government by the people of Viet-Nam and the people of the world. (It is hoped that the Ambassador will continue his efforts to

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/7-3161. Secret; Priority. Drafted by Wood, Silver, and other members of the Vietnam Task Force; cleared with various other officers in the Departments of State, Defense, and the Treasury, as well as with the Bureau of the Budget, the International Cooperation Administration, and the President (per Rostow); repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd, and pouched to Phnom Penh, Bangkok, Vientiane, Paris, London, Ottawa, New Delhi, and Tokyo.

[2] In telegram 145, July 31, the Embassy reported that it considered the draft letter to Diem "excellent in tone and substance" and offered suggestions for minor changes and some additions. (*Ibid.*)

persuade President Diem to engage more fully in his civic action program non-Communist elements now in political opposition.) This is, of course, part of a continuing effort that must be made with President Diem and his government generally.

Ambassador Nolting should make clear in his presentation that, if this is to be a truly joint effective effort, action by each country must be related to that by the other. In particular we attach great importance to the reasonable implementation of the agreed criteria governing imports; we also consider the raising of the effective piaster rate applicable to U.S. commodity aid, to which it is understood President Diem has already agreed, an indispensable part of our effort. Action by the GVN on both of these matters will be very closely related to the U.S. contribution to the overall effort. The Ambassador may assure President Diem that increased piaster realization per dollar's worth of imports will not be used as a reason for reducing the American share of our joint efforts.

President Diem and his government need to be reminded of adverse criticism that our Viet-Nam program has experienced in the Congress and in the American press generally favorable to his cause, and to be discreetly warned that the program cannot profit from further attack. In the avoidance of such attack, the GVN itself plays the essential role.

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114. Letter From President Kennedy to President Diem [1]

Washington, August 5, 1961

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: Dr. Eugene Staley has told me personally of the mission which he and his special financial group undertook to Viet-Nam at my request. He has told me of the courteous and understanding welcome he received from you and from the members of your government, and has described to me the progress you have already made despite the great difficulties of Communist subversion which you face. I was pleased to hear of the cooperative and friendly spirit which animated the meetings of the Vietnamese and

[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files, FRC 66 A 878, 350 GVN–TF–SFG. Attached to the source text is a copy of the letter of transmittal, dated August 6, from Nolting to Diem.

American experts. It is particularly encouraging to me that this spirit of cooperation, which was embodied in the joint undertakings of the counter-insurgency plan and which was so evident during the visit of Vice President Johnson, will now be carried on through the very practical medium of parallel Vietnamese and American committees.

I have examined the joint action program which the Vietnamese and American experts propose [2] and I heartily agree with the three basic tenets on which their recommendations are based, namely:

1. Security requirements must, for the present, be given first priority.

2. Military operations will not achieve lasting results unless economic and social programs are continued and accelerated.

3. It is in our joint interest to accelerate measures to achieve a self-sustaining economy and a free and peaceful society in Viet-Nam.

I also agree that we are more likely to succeed if both of our countries take adequate action now than if we react to the Communist threat by slow and insufficient measures.

I consider that the joint action program put before us by our expert groups offers a sound foundation on which our two governments can build rapidly and successfully. Therefore, having in mind your letter of June 9 [3] and the strong recommendation of Ambassador Nolting, I should like to inform you that the United States will provide equipment and assistance in training as needed for an increase in the armed forces of Viet-Nam from 170,000 to 200,000 men. In order to make such an increase as effective as possible I suggest that before the time when the level of 170,000 is reached our governments should satisfy themselves on the following points: (1) That there then exists a mutually agreed upon, geographically phased strategic plan for bringing Viet-Cong subversion in the Republic of Viet-Nam under control, (2) That on the basis of such a plan there exists an understanding on the training and use of these 30,000 additional men, (3) That the rate of increase from 170,000 to [illegible]0 will be regulated to permit the most efficient absorption and utilization of additional personnel and material in the Vietnamese armed forces with due regard to Viet-Nam's resources.

I also suggest, in view of the fact that the force level of 200,000 will probably not be reached until late in 1962, that decision regarding a further increase above 200,000 be postponed until next year when the question can be re-examined on the basis of the situation which we shall then be facing. Meanwhile, the buildup in

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[2] See Document 93.

[3] See footnote 3, Document 69.

equipment and training of the Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps within already agreed levels should be expedited.

Returning to the joint action program, I am most encouraged to learn of the large measure of agreement reached by our expert groups on the steps required to meet the piaster financing problems posed by the joint action program. It seems to me that in the light of these recommendations we can move forward simultaneously on measures to solve this problem by a combination of actions by the two governments: by the Government of the United States, within the limits of available funds, to provide the external resources which are required, including commodity imports which can be justified and absorbed under the seven criteria of the joint action program, and by the Government of Viet-Nam, to generate the piasters to direct the resources of Viet-Nam to the highest priority requirements. The several means to acquire such piasters are spelled out in the joint action program. I hope that our parallel committees can immediately cooperate in working out target estimates for an import program which will give both our governments a basis for planning.

The early implementation of the joint recommendation of the expert groups regarding tax reform and the principle of a single and realistic rate of exchange, using methods which take into account the political and psychological factors which I know you have to weigh, will certainly increase the effectiveness of American aid to Viet-Nam. I hope this recommendation can be implemented soon. Within the limits of funds to be made available by the Congress and within the agreed criteria, my policy shall be to help you as much as possible to achieve a break-through in your efforts to bring security to your people and to build toward economic independence.

Turning to the experts' joint recommendations for emergency social action and to the direct aid programs already under way, I am asking Mr. Labouisse, Director of International Cooperation, to conduct through USOM Viet-Nam a thorough and expeditious review with your experts of the new proposals and of other programs which these proposals were intended to supplement. Among these I mention as of special interest the fields of communications, including television and radio, agrovilles, land development, agricultural credit and agricultural extension, extended assistance to road building, continued efforts to expand education, particularly primary and elementary education in the villages, training for rural administration, and plans to assure more and better equipped and trained officials, adequately compensated, especially in rural areas and in the villages. Our basic premise is that these programs be designed with your government to meet your needs and conditions, and that they be carried out by your people, with our assistance where required. I especially wish USOM to offer whatever help you think will be

most effective to strengthen the vital ties of loyalty between the people of Free Viet-Nam and their government.

As an integral part of our efforts to meet the current crises, I believe it is essential that we continue and expand the progress which has already been made toward the long range development of Viet-Nam. The emergency measures which we undertake should be solidly anchored—as soon as possible—in a comprehensive long range planning process to determine the best uses which can be made of available resources on a time-phased basis. Only in this way can we adequately meet the long and short term requirements which interact in the problems which our two countries must solve together. This will require the creation of more effective planning machinery as recommended in the joint report of our experts. In addition to development of a long range plan, the training of staff to carry on planning activities (covering such matters as the use of medical manpower and teachers for which Viet-Nam has competing civilian-military requirements) might be expedited. I urge that our parallel committees develop specific projects in line with the general recommendations of the report.

In the face of competing and urgent demands for aid and assistance from countries throughout the world we shall make our contribution to the future of Viet-Nam. Our support of Viet-Nam's independence and development will, as I have assured you in the past, remain among the highest priorities of American foreign policy. As indicated above, we are prepared to commit, within the limits of our available aid funds, substantial resources to assist you in carrying out the military and economic and social components of the special action program. In order to speed the action during this emergency period and to permit greater flexibility I should like to emphasize that the chief responsibility for the planning and execution of the American share of the program will, more than ever, rest with Ambassador Nolting and, under his direction, with MAAG and USOM. In this connection I hope that, with the delegation of maximum authority to the parallel committees as recommended by our experts, the committees will assure follow-up action, approve modifications of the program and "recommend measures to improve and adapt the special action program as the situation changes."

In conclusion I believe that we have now agreed on sound ways to strengthen the Vietnamese economy and Vietnamese security in the face of the mounting Communist threat. Now we can proceed to develop additional concrete plans and carry them out rapidly and effectively.

I firmly believe that if our countries continue to work so effectively together, the Almighty will grant us the strength and the will to succeed.

With warm personal regards.
Sincerely.

John F. Kennedy [1]

[1] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

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115. Memorandum of a Conversation, Quai d'Orsay, Paris, August 7, 1961, 10:30 a.m.[1]

US/MC/9

PARTICIPANTS

United States	*United Kingdom*
The Secretary of State	Lord Home
Ambassador Gavin	Mr Malcolm MacDonald
Ambassador Harriman	Mr Edward Peck
Mr Steeves	Mr Michael Butler
Mr Sullivan	Sir Pierson Dixon
Mr Usher	Mr J W Russell

France
M Couve de Murville
M Jacques Rous
M Charles Lucet
M M Richer
Ambassador Palaiz
Mr Baraduc

SUBJECT

Viet Nam

Couve de Murville asked the Secretary whether he wished to say something on Viet-Nam.

The Secretary said he would be glad to do so and that he would appreciate any comments which his British and French colleagues would like to make.

He said we have been working with Diem in bringing about improvements in the economic and military field. We have been

[1] Source: Department of State, Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation: Lot 65 D 330, August 1961. Secret. Drafted by Usher on August 7, edited and approved by Steeves, and approved in S on August 8. This discussion took place during the Ministerial Consultations on Berlin, August 4–9.

working in conformity with the counter-insurgency plan and on economic plans which might help to bring the situation in Viet Nam under control.

Vietnamese military forces have had some successes with their counter-insurgency tactics. We are also prepared to put in larger resources to strengthen the civil situation. All of these efforts encounter the problem of intimidation by the communist insurgency throughout the country. One of our great concerns is the flow of fresh elements from North Viet-Nam through Laos.

The Secretary said we plan to make a very substantial investment of effort in South Viet-Nam. There are advantages in Viet-Nam as compared with Laos—a better army with a will to fight, a better economy and in fact a situation in general far in advance of conditions in Laos.

Couve said that the United States is doing the maximum amount to help the Vietnamese. On the military side, he understood that the Secretary thought the situation not too bad. The Secretary interposed that he thought it was not too bad and not too good. Couve went on to say that the real problem is always the same, namely, the domestic political problem. He said the difficulty is to change the present government, which is a strong government, into a popular government. He thought we had all more or less failed in our efforts.

Couve went on to say Diem and the people around him are from the central part of Viet-Nam around Hue, and that it has been impossible up to now to give more positions in the government to the Cochin-Chinese. Couve said he had talked to Sihanouk about this, and that Sihanouk had said he thought this was the heart of the problem. The elite of the Cochin-Chinese south has the feeling that it is excluded from the government and is therefore in the opposition.

Lord Home said the British think the situation in Viet-Nam has gotten a little worse.[2] He said that the British have made arrangements to send Colonel Thompson to Viet Nam with rather a small mission. There is nothing that Thompson doesn't know about counter-insurgency methods, and he should be able to be of help. Lord Home said that he didn't know how the government could be made more popular.

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[2] According to a memorandum of conversation between Rusk and Lord Home on August 6, Home implied that British reports indicated that many considered Diem "hopeless." Rusk replied that Diem was improving but that he feared "it would be a long drawn-out matter." Rusk expressed his hope that the countries in the area—Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, and others—could form a regional organization which countries like India could support, thus permitting the demise of SEATO. (*Ibid.*)

Lord Home remarked that the problem is Diem, who continues to exhibit his well-known defects, but there is no alternative but to try to help him improve.

The Secretary thanked Couve for his observations about the Cochin-Chinese, and said he thought we might do something about trying to get more of them into the government. He said it might be helpful if the French could give us some suggestions regarding able Cochin-Chinese who might be brought into the government. Couve agreed to do this.[3]

[1] No paper from the French Government along these lines has been found.

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116. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State[1]

Saigon, August 8, 1961—2 p.m.

192. Department telegram 140.[2] Task force Saigon greatly encouraged by President's letter contained reftel. Letter, with minor changes as per Deptel 146,[3] was delivered to Thuan for President Diem early August 7, followed by hour and one-half discussion with Pres Diem and Thuan after letter had been studied. Following is report of that conversation.

I greeted President Diem with remark that I hoped he was as pleased by the tone and content of President Kennedy's letter as were the members of our task force here in Saigon, as it appeared to us to represent another major landmark in US resolve to help his country. To my surprise and annoyance, he responded that he had found in it no "figures about the amount of US aid". I said that we would get to that later, but first I would like with his permission to underline certain points in connection with the President's message. We then proceeded to review the letter and in the course of discussion, I made the following points.

(A) In adopting the major recommendations of the joint Vietnamese-American experts' report, the United States had not only reenforced its already large commitment to Vietnam but had also

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/8-861. Secret; Priority. Repeated to Bangkok, Vientiane, CINCPAC for PolAd, Paris, London, Ottawa, New Delhi, Tokyo, and Phnom Penh.

[2] Document 113.

[3] Dated August 5. (Department of State, Central Files 751 K.5-MSP/8-561)

adopted a new "break-through" philosophy of action which we are prepared to follow up to the extent that the necessary decisions and actions by the GVN make possible. I said that in my opinion progress already made by cooperative action had been remarkable The Tempo and efficiency of programs in many fields in order to put the Viet Cong definitely on the defensive military politically and psychologically [*sic*]. We shared President Diem's feelings that it is not enough to win a few battles and score successes here and there, but that we had to systematize our joint efforts and mount an increasing, broad, systematic offensive in all fields.

(B) In this connection we attached particular importance to President Kennedy's point (1) in connection with the increase of GVN armed forces by 30,000. I said that we were gratified by the recent successes of the Vietnamese forces, but there still seemed to be lacking an over-all strategic plan to be carried out by phases in predetermined geographic areas, to liberate those areas and to secure permanently their pacification and allegiance to the government. I said that Gen. McGarr had been working on this constantly, and only recently I had seen another memorandum [4] which he had sent to the President urging the development and adoption of such a plan. I realized the extreme sensitivity of such a plan, but we wished to be assured that one existed or would exist just as soon as possible.

(C) With regard to the financing of the joint action program, it was clear that a part of the additional costs would be in piasters, which only the GVN could produce. The seven criteria developed by the joint experts group as guidelines to regulate the type and volume of US commercial imports [5] were designed, not to conserve US aid dollars, but to protect the Vietnamese economy and to assure a program of US aid which could be justified before our Congress and people as contributing to the kind of economic and social development of Vietnam which we both desire. At the beginning of our conversation, President Diem had inquired about an aid figure. I thought frankly that we could best arrive at a constructive solution if we approached the matter from a different point of view. I asked the President to accept my assurance that we would be willing, within the limits of appropriated funds and the agreed criteria, to set high targets for the importation of US commercial aid goods. We would then see what amount could in fact be absorbed within the agreed criteria. Thuan interjected that he hoped we would not be rigid in determining the type of goods which could be imported under the criteria, and said that GVN's long-range planning could

[4] Not further identified.
[5] See Document 93.

not go forward without assurances for the future. I replied that we expected the criteria to be maintained, but that I saw no reason why we could not agree on the types of goods to be imported. A part of the problem is obviously the number of piasters generated by each dollar's worth of imports. My government hoped and expected that a definite decision would be taken promptly by the GVN to increase substantially the piaster yield. This is necessary if the joint program is to be accomplished.

(D) There followed a discussion of the need promptly to organize parallel committees for planning and implementation. I reminded Diem that the first time we had had a conversation together, at Dalat several months ago,* he had mentioned the desirability of developing an over-all plan. I said we warmly welcomed this idea, and the experts' report stressed the need of committees to plan systematically, establish priorities, and follow through on implementation. As President Kennedy's letter had said, the US was prepared, in this special crisis situation in Viet Nam, to give maximum flexibility to its representatives in Viet Nam; by the same token, it was necessary to the Vietnamese Govt to set itself up in a manner which would delegate authority and make possible close and rapid coordination of effort.

Again reverting to the piaster question, I said that it would be necessary promptly to establish a higher piaster yield on dollar imports, on the understanding that the US would not use increased piaster yield as a reason for diminishing its own contribution. The whole purpose was to increase our joint effort. To arrive at definite results, it was necessary promptly to sit down in a committee and to reach definite decisions. At this point I had the opportunity to emphasize the value of long-range economic planning and programs which could stimulate the sale of US imports in the private sector. Diem, catching the point, said he thought that certain of this [*his?*] road building projects, as well as city development projects might be done through private Vietnamese-Chinese enterprise, which would expand the market for US imports and generate piasters.

(E) Turning to action in the political and psychological fields, I said my govt felt that the new decisions embodied in President Kennedy's letter were sufficiently great and far-reaching to warrant their use by Pres Diem in a major campaign to inspire the nation and to build broader and more solid political support for his regime. I mentioned the fact that in the US and in the world press generally, while sympathetic understanding of Viet Nam and its govt had increased, there was still room for improvement and that President Diem himself could contribute greatly to this. I said that certain

* Not further identified.

members of our congress think that more can and should be done in the direction of social and political consolidation and progress, and that we wished to establish an aid program on a solid basis of congressional support which would assure its continuance. Thuan picked up this point and suggested that a joint communiqué should be issued. He said he thought this might be the occasion for a "psychological shock" campaign, to rally the country. I said I felt that President Diem should seriously consider launching a drive to gain Vietnamese public confidence in its govt, using the adoption of the experts' report, plus perhaps speeches by radio in which Pres Diem could make an appeal for national unity and offer opportunity within the new program to Vietnamese who had for one reason or another stood aside from govt activity. I suggested that Thuan and I might come up with some ideas for the Pres on this, and he seemed to agree, but added that he might use the occasion again to explain the need for self-sacrifice under the doctrine of "personalism".

While Diem did not commit himself to anything specific during this conversation, he warmed up considerably to the opportunities offered by Pres Kennedy's letter. Certainly the discussion ended more hopefully than it began, although I tried unsuccessfully to pin him down on fiscal reform. His attitude did not seem unappreciative or evasive; but he has a habit of thinking in terms of a series of immediate things to be done, to get wound up in details, and to neglect to develop a broad pattern of systematic action. I returned to the question of systematic planning by committee on several occasions, and while he gave a generally favorable response, it was clear that he was worried by the feeling that any such delegation of responsibility might take out of his hands the detailed planning and direction for which he has such an appetite. Nevertheless, I think we have made some real headway. It was agreed that Thuan and I should get together promptly to sort out matters and determine where we go from here. At Thuan's suggestion, we agreed that the first thing to be considered would be a possible communiqué (or some other method of "choc psychologique"), to be followed promptly by a designation of parallel committees for planning and implementation.

Before departing, I asked Diem whether there was any special word he wanted me to get back to Pres Kennedy. He said please to express his sincere appreciation for the message, to which he would like to give further study and thought. To my suggestion that we should immediately proceed to organize committees for planning, to estimate costs, and to solve the financial problems, he agreed and

left it to Thuan and me to pursue. We shall do so and report further.

Nolting

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117. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, August 8, 1961—10:32 p.m.

160. Task Force VN. High level interest exists in answers to following questions. Task Force Washington has partial answers given in various past Saigon messages but would appreciate your current answers by August 14.

1. What is your assessment of the likely scale and character of the Viet Cong effort over coming months?

2. When are the Vietnamese likely to produce a plan for the systematic elimination of the Viet Cong; and what ideas does Task Force Saigon have about what such a systematic plan should look like?

3. What are the possibilities of further action by Diem's forces against North Viet-Nam: (1) by air drops? (2) by coastal raids? What would be Diem's attitude to an enlarged program supported by U.S.?

4. Is the counter-guerrilla training adequate which is being conducted? Do we have the necessary U.S. Special Forces personnel on the job?

5. What would be the effect upon Viet-Nam troop requirements if Diem were encouraged to push out into Laos in order to control infiltration routes? Would Diem be willing to join in a cooperative action with Laos and Thailand to clean up the panhandle of Laos? What is your assessment in Saigon of the likelihood that Sarit and Phoumi would cooperate in such an effort?

Ball

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/8–861. Top Secret; Priority. Drafted by Cottrell, cleared with S/S, initialed by U. Alexis Johnson for the Acting Secretary, and repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd.

118. Editorial Note

On August 11, McGeorge Bundy transmitted a memorandum to Secretary Rusk which constituted National Security Action Memorandum No. 65 setting forth the President's decisions following review of the Joint Action Program submitted on July 14 (see Document 93). For text of NSAM No. 65, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pages 241–244.

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119. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, August 14, 1961—11 a.m.

226. Task Force VN. This replies paras 1, 2 and 4 Department's 160. [2] Reply other paras cabled separately. [3]

1. VC most likely continue concentrate efforts coming months on increased number small-scale military attacks and political activities in all parts South Viet-Nam, with purpose hamper communications, extend control rural areas, isolate cities, disrupt economy, and discourage and frustrate GVN forces by steady infliction casualties in ambushes and attacks on small posts and units without exposing themselves effective counter attacks. Higher incidence all GQ [?] activity expected central Viet-Nam, particularly in areas adjacent to Laos, but also including other areas which have been relatively quiet. Increase also likely in area surrounding Saigon, while Mekong Delta region probably will continue show high number incidents most sectors with possible increase end of rainy season November.

Larger-scale VC military attacks in force of 100 or more unlikely to occur very often in Mekong Delta area or in area around Saigon given improved RVNAF countermeasures these areas. Larger attacks in central VN highlands however a distinct possibility as DRV infiltrates more personnel and supplies from and through Laos. Possible that DRV might aim for establishment "liberated area" in central highlands for purpose setting up "revolutionary government," but we do not believe this could be achieved without infiltration

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/8–1461. Secret; Priority. Repeated to Vientiane, Bangkok, and CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Document 117.

[3] See *infra*.

men and arms on greatly increased and much more obvious scale. Available signs indicate, however, that DRV not at this time prepared incur consequences of overt aggression: i.e., A likely condemnation by ICC (and therefore by neutrals) and risk of provoking direct US or SEATO intervention.

Indiscriminate terror campaign or one directed against Americans in Saigon a continuing grim prospect. If latter occurs, might well be directed toward American dependents as part of DRV tactics of gradually confining Americans to Saigon and eventually driving them out of Viet-Nam. Thus far, however, GVN security measures in Saigon have proved reasonably effective.

VC political activities likely center on use "National Liberation Front" and related organizations to give semblance if not substance widespread support their cause and to cloak activities in guise popular revolutionary movement. Also will continue effort subvert tribal minorities in central VN highlands, with importance this area mounting if free world position Laos deteriorates.

Important note that while VC guerrilla capabilities increased recent months (such as estimated strength 14,000 as compared 7,000 Sept. 1960) and range their future activities likely to increase as result, they are not in position to sustain large-scale military operations against RVNAF or to secure "liberated area" in SVN in which establish solid political and military base for conduct their operations. They might however by indirect means achieve their intermediate objective of overthrowing Diem if continued or stepped up guerrilla activities were to engender frustration in GVN armed forces to point of bringing about coup.

2. We cannot predict with assurance when GVN will produce geographically phased national plan for systematic elimination of Viet Cong. We have been pressing for this ever since presentation of CIP in February. However, President Kennedy's recent letter to President Diem [4] suggesting development of such plan plus very strong local American representation at all appropriate GVN levels should move GVN to accord high priority to development of desired plan. CHMAAG in separate letters to Diem and Thuan as recently as 7 August [5] again strongly urged development of national phased strategic operation plan for progressively clearing SVN of Viet Cong presence and influence.

Counter-insurgency planning as far as military is concerned stands as follows: area responsibilities of major commands and workable command structure have been established for planning and

[4] Document 114
[5] Not found

conduct of military operations against Viet Cong in consonance with CIP.

Concept for preparation of detailed ARVN counter-insurgency operations has now been reduced to writing and has been published in field command directive "Concepts of Pacification Operations" dated July 21, 1961.* This RVNAF concept takes into account psywar, winning the people, civic action and necessary coordination of civil-military effort as well as strictly military considerations. Corps commanders have been directed to submit soonest their corps area plans based on this concept paper. These corps plans will then be combined into overall military operations plan. This 20 page concepts document is sound guide for conduct of military operations under conditions of tactics, terrain and politics existing here in Viet-Nam and stems almost entirely from the MAAG "Tactics and Techniques" study.

We visualize a national CIP to be composed somewhat as follows:

A. Statement of objectives of national plan.

B. Statement of responsibilities of governmental agencies and their plans as they affect overall national plan.

C. Establishment of machinery and responsibilities for coordination and execution.

D. Annexes covering in detail concept of carrying out counter-insurgency campaign in all its military, political, economic, psychological and social ramifications. This would include treatment of various phases required within each operation in each specific geographical area.

E. Annexes showing priority by geographic areas for carrying out offensive operations and setting forth in general terms goals for phasing of pacification process. Priority on clearing various areas of Viet Cong will probably depend on number of factors, among them strength of Viet Cong in area, threat they pose to important localities, their proximity to DRV and Laotian border, psychological factors and like.

National CIP must provide for flexibility sufficient to allow all agencies to react to changes in character and location of Viet Cong threat. Basic military concept of bringing entire country under governmental control is based on locating VC and eliminating them in successive areas. Larger groups would be located through use of net forces such as Rangers and eliminated with spear type forces such as regular ARVN battalions. Small VC groups or individuals more or less indigenous to their hamlet or village would be located and dealt with by civil guard and self-defense corps. This concept requires that civil and military leaders down to hamlet level, as part of

* Not found.

"preparation phase", know of planned operations long enough in advance to coordinate and cooperate in preparing target area, intelligence wise and psychologically, prior to actual attack—as well as during and after military phase. Concept also requires upgrading of civil guard and self-defense corps through provision of equipment and adequate training program now in progress. To assure peasants and villagers in given area that they will have continuing protection, and thus inducing them to furnish intelligence on indigenous VC individuals or small groups as well as any information which may reach them on larger groups.

Because of advanced development of VC control, they are so strongly entrenched in certain areas that successful military operations against them are necessary prerequisite to effective political, economic or psychological action in area. However, political, psychological and economic elements must also be employed as integral part of this military phase whenever applicable and to full degree possible. For these reasons in Viet-Nam it is necessary to give priority to military phase of counter-insurgent operations, in order that other and equally important elements of final victory can be fully exploited in phases which must immediately follow or whenever possible accompany actual military operations.

Phasing of plan should extend, not only to geographical areas to be cleared by military operations, but should also include progressively phased actions whereby cleared area would be returned to normal peace time conditions. These actions can be designated as "preparation phase" which precedes military operations end [*and?*] establishes proper element of acceptance for "military phase" during which area would be cleared of VC. This is then followed by "security phase" which is final phase permanently installing civil government in cleared area under governmental control as well as insuring its continued security. This requires preplanned occupation by paramilitary, provincial security forces as other civil agencies under province chiefs. If this is impractical initially, then RVNAF forces involved in attack must remain to prevent VC organization from again taking over until province chief's security forces can maintain order and control and rehabilitate area. Preplanning and implementation of this security phase at civil-military level requires close coordination and is most important.

Plan such as this should not of course be an inflexible one which does not permit for unforeseeable changes requiring adjustments in situation, but rather should provide well defined preplanned series of intermediate goals based on progressive, geographically phased final objective—victory over VC. Such plan must be comprehensive in nature and take into full account political, psychological and civic action aspects of not only military defeat of

VC but all important problem of preventing guerrilla re-entry into cleared areas.

4. RVNAF forces have dual mission of defending country against overt aggression and destruction of insurgent forces within country. Training now being conducted is directed towards preparing these forces for accomplishment these missions. Until one year ago, training emphasis was being placed primarily on preparing for defense against overt aggression rather than counter-insurgency operations. At that time only small percentage of training was devoted counter-guerrilla type training. In view of insurgency situation this was considered inadequate. As result MAAG recommendations JGS reoriented training program to insure all training was heavily weighted in counter-guerrilla subjects such as Ranger oriented training and psychological conditioning of individual. ARVN training progressing but slower than MAAG feels required by situation. This because bulk ARVN troops are committed against VC. At time their transfer from department interior to department defense, apparent that civil guard required military training before they could adequately perform fighting mission. At MAAG insistence JGS initiated program to train civil guard along counter-guerrilla lines. This program consists of individual, leadership and unit training. First group civil guard personnel began training January 1961. Civil guard force now being trained Quang Trung and Song Mai training centers with training completely oriented on counter-insurgency effort.

Mobile, lightly armed Ranger units specifically designed for combat against insurgents and their training continues receive heavy emphasis. Ranger cadre training initiated June 1960, and in April 1961, joint U.S.-ARVN Ranger training team began unit training program for Ranger companies. Intensive unit training now being conducted at two sites in or near actual operational areas assigned to companies. Plans have been made in past six months to expand overall RVNAF school system to meet increased need for trained leaders and specialists.

Due urgent necessity train forces more rapidly to meet current and developing situation, MAAG has developed a master training program to retrain on rotational basis, all present VN ground forces and train newly activated units. U.S. advisors will instruct ARVN and civil guard instructors and cadre, assist in selection training area and preparation training schedules and lesson plans, plus actively supervise actual training. This system has proved highly successful at Quang Trung and Song Mai training centers and with U.S. mobile training teams assigned to Ranger training sites. Training programs have been pared of all "nice to know" subjects and concentration has been placed on "must know" and training times have been cut to absolute minimum.

Sufficient Special Forces personnel now on hand to train Vietnamese Special Forces (1st Observation Group). In addition, 21 Ranger qualified personnel permanently assigned MAAG plus others experienced counter-guerrilla tactics and techniques. Also during FY 61, five Special Forces mobile training teams, totaling 53 personnel, have been brought South Vietnam and have been utilized for training regular ARVN forces. At present Special Forces mobile training team conduction gaining for Ranger units at three different training sites. Training of additional forces recently authorized will require additional MAAG advisors trained and qualified in Special Forces, Ranger and counter-guerrilla operations. No particular problem anticipated this regard in numbers or quality.

In summary, consider present quality counter-guerrilla training excellent. Problem lies ARVN ability to make available for training sufficient forces from operational areas. Success of MAAG plan mentioned above is largely dependent on output of trained units from 20,000 force increase which will serve as rotational base for old units now on operations. RVNAF has not yet felt results this form JCE [?] increase due to lead time required for activation, organization, equipping and training new units.

Nolting

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120. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State[1]

Saigon, August 14, 1961—7 p.m.

229. Task Force VN. This replies to paras 3 and 5 Department's 160.[2] Since replies to other paras need not be classified above Secret, they are being forwarded by separate cable[3] to facilitate handling and use.

3. Re action against North Vietnam, Diem is not impetuous man. Actions he has approved to date are limited in scope and intention: to build intelligence base and provide foundation for restricted harassment and sabotage. This is designed to maintain hope of liberation in north and inspire passive resistance to slow

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/8-1461. Top Secret; Priority. Repeated to Vientiane, Bangkok, and CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Document 117.

[3] *Supra*.

NVN's development and absorb its energies to divert them from attacks on SVN. It seeks to avoid encouraging any premature violent uprising which would be repressed for lack of sufficient support from free world. Diem also sees that larger scale attacks upon NVN would extend DRV's liberty of action against SVN when he has enough problems from DRV's covert attacks. In specific terms:

(A) Air Drops: Diem has accepted this tactic, and risk of losses among participants, but is deeply concerned over possible losses among limited number of pilots in VNAF. Within limits outlined above he would probably accept an enlarged program, especially one providing more modern aircraft and additional aircrews.

(B) Coastal raids. Diem accepts coastal infiltration of agents. Any program of coastal raids would be evaluated against considerations outlined above, as well as practical problems of providing necessary sea lift capable of penetrating DRV's naval defenses (including some 25 modern Swatow class patrol gunboats).

5. Diem gravely concerned over deterioration situation southern Laos in recent months and would of course like to see action taken to clean up that area. Any decision on part of GVN to throw sizable force into this effort would be grave one not only because it would represent broadening of war in which GVN now engaged but because of limited available GVN forces to meet current military needs. Believe however that GVN would seriously consider as part cooperative effort commitment some additional forces beyond small number of Vietnamese Special Forces and regulars now engaged in Laos and along Lao border. GVN officials continue to talk in admiring and favorable terms about use of Pakistani troops in Laos, but we are not in position judge practicality of this idea. Diem might not insist upon actual involvement of US combat forces at outset of cooperative action in Laos but would certainly seek to obtain clear commitment by US to send in combat forces if need developed.

GVN operations Laos tactically and strategically sound and desirable. Due guerrilla war now going on in Viet Nam GVN military forces immediately available for cooperative action in Laos could probably consist only additional small units somewhat similar those now in Laos (principally along route 9) but with perhaps broader role, possibly to include limited combat support of Lao units. GVN might as calculated risk commit larger forces to Laos with view toward preventing intensified future VC infiltration through Laos, but sizable GVN operation in Laos could probably be considered only within time frame required to mobilize, train and equip additional forces now planned but not yet available. Forces being added under 30,000 increase will provide additional capability but these not available in significant numbers before late 1962. Should be recognized that, if the above occurs, there is possibility

that increased enemy action will force GVN to escalate its forces committed across Lao border beyond whatever level it originally decides—e.g., small to sizable. In latter case it important it be kept in mind that additional 30,000 increment is required for GVN primary task of defeating insurgency within Viet Nam at approximately its present intensity.

Bangkok and Vientiane much better qualified than me to comment on likelihood Sarit and Phoumi cooperation in cleanup southern Laos. From Saigon it would appear that Phoumi could be persuaded without much trouble as we believe there is inclination on his part at times to throw in towel re northern Laos, withdraw his forces to south and attempt set up separate government there. Phoumi would probably regard cooperative effort in southern Laos as at least giving him greater assurance of being able hold out there if he is obliged give up north.

Would appear to US Sarit might be harder to convince that southern Laos should have priority as against occupying all parts of Laos adjacent to Mekong and thus bordering Thailand. We would assume if enough outside support thrown in (e.g., Pakistani troops) to conduct both operations, Sarit would willingly cooperate on southern Laos operation as well.

Above is based on my understanding first question under five refers to cooperative action just as remaining two questions do. If, however, first question stands alone and refers to unilateral GVN troop employment in eastern Laos for primary purpose defense South Viet Nam, then our response is:

With respect infiltration individuals or small groups VC, GVN troops not now capable with or without pushing out into Laos controlling very numerous rugged and forested infiltration points which occur entire length all borders here. Military forces required for high degree control infiltration type described above would be prohibitive regardless location of troops. On other hand for control any sizable communist troop units or supply routes GVN forces located Laos on major avenues of approach and commanding terrain worthy consideration. This for purposes early warning and desirability meeting enemy ahead of own borders plus additional indication determination stop aggression. Extent GVN troop commitment for this purpose would be governed by essentially same factors as those outlined above with respect to cooperative action in Laos. Presently RVNAF are studying MAAG recommended techniques to reduce infiltration such as defoliant, change from present static guard posts to mobile concept involving additional patrols including dogs, establishment of buffer population, additional roads and air fields and

like, which are long range in nature and cannot be expected to stop but only progressively reduce infiltration.

Nolting

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121. Editorial Note

The Conclusions of National Intelligence Estimate 14.3/53–61, August 15, entitled "Prospects for North and South Vietnam", are printed in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pages 245–246.

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122. Editorial Note

On August 17, William J. Jorden, a former *New York Times* correspondent who became a member of the Department of State's Policy Planning Council earlier in the month, left the United States for a fact-finding mission to South Vietnam. His task was to gather documentation on infiltration by North Vietnamese forces into the South. In a letter of August 17 to Ambassador Nolting, Vietnam Task Force Director Sterling J. Cottrell wrote that Jorden had only learned of his assignment the previous week and the suggestion that he be sent had been approved by the President within 24 hours. Cottrell described Jorden as "soft-spoken and willing to listen" and added:

"He is extremely serious about this undertaking and realizes that the material which he is able to assemble with your help and write up is likely to have a considerable influence on U.S. policy decisions. He is also prepared for the fact that he may not be able to obtain enough evidence to make a fully impressive case." (Department of State, Vietnam Working Group Files: Lot 66 D 193, VN 1961 Presidential Program Psychological TF 26 thru 31)

123. Memorandum From the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) [1]

JCSM-583-61 *Washington, August 24, 1961.*

SUBJECT

North Vietnam

1. Reference is made to memorandum by the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (LSA), dated 19 July 1961, [2] subject as above, which requests the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the consequences and effectiveness of certain United States courses of action against North Vietnam.

2. The Viet Cong receives its support by way of North Vietnam, about half of the total being brought in over inland trails and the other half being landed along the coast from junks. A large proportion of the support for communist aggression in all of Southeast Asia passes through North Vietnam.

3. It is estimated that successful interdiction of the communist logistic support passing through North Vietnam would facilitate military control of the Viet Cong and the maintenance of a favorable logistic balance over communist-supported forces in Southeast Asia.

4. The United States has the capability to substantially cut the flow of communist military support passing through North Vietnam, if and when it is decided to commit United States forces openly to this operation. Formal commitment of United States forces in this manner would probably generate Communist Chinese overt countermeasures, the magnitude of which would be determined by the degree to which Communist China desired to become openly committed to aggression in Southeast Asia and subject herself to further countermeasures.

5. In event the United States does not desire to commit its own forces openly to interdiction, there are covert, unconventional and guerrilla-type operations, as well as other measures, which can be made more effective.

6. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, with the assistance of CINCPAC, are investigating as a matter of priority the entire problem of interdicting support for the communist effort in Southeast Asia, together with the various means available and in sight for accomplishing this interdiction. Examples of specific lines of endeavor being pursued or investigated are:

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[1] Source: Department of State, S/P Files: Lot 67 D 548, Vietnam. Top Secret. Stamped on the source text are the words "SecDef has seen."

[2] Document 99.

a. Obtaining better intelligence on the nature and scope of the interdiction problem.

b. Training and equipping of the South Vietnam junk fleet has been accelerated. Development of an increased capability for the interdiction of North Vietnam imports and exports by all of South Vietnam's armed forces is being investigated. Unconventional operations are being studied as well as conventional operations to accomplish this interdiction.

c. Examining such nonmilitary measures as offering rewards to communist ship masters and fishing boat captains to destroy their cargoes or divert them to Free World ports.

d. Accelerating United States research and development of more effective weapons, techniques and tactics, unconventional as well as conventional, for interdiction of communist support to aggression world-wide; exploiting modern technologies and, where appropriate, precedents already set by the enemy in unconventional aggression. In this regard, a development and research group has recently been established in South Vietnam to perform this mission with regard to the problems in that area.

e. Examining all possibilities for new legal interpretations within the framework of modern circumstances, which would facilitate the problem of conventional interdiction. The present general interpretations of maritime law give legalistic protection to communist support of insurgency movements by sea. Legally, such activity on the high seas can be performed with relative impunity.

f. Increasing the unconventional and covert capabilities of United States forces in the area to interdict support for the communist effort in Southeast Asia.

g. Preventing the employment of Free World shipping in support of such distribution points of communist aggression as North Vietnam and Cuba.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:
L.L. Lemnitzer
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

124. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, August 25, 1961—7 p.m.

277. Task Force VN. Gardiner, Mendenhall and I had almost 3 hour session with SecState Presidency Thuan and SecState National Economy Thanh Aug 24 with following results:

1. Thuan made clear GVN had taken decision to raise piaster yield to average of 74 piasters per dollar and said this decision could be cabled to Washington. At same time under questioning, he disengaged GVN decision on piaster yield from level US aid. Piaster yield will consist of 35 as countervalue at official exchange rate, 25 representing new "economic development and defense tax", and average 14 from other taxes. We believe this represents real progress as this is decision which has been sought by US for several years.

Thuan frankly stated this is devaluation in everything but name, but stressed importance of avoiding labeling it as devaluation publicly and officially. When I asked why GVN adopting complex system of taxes and subsidies rather than direct simple approach Thuan replied with smile that it was because of complexity. He explained that psychologically masses will not understand that rate has been changed, and political and social results will therefore be limited. On other hand if GVN were to announce change in official rate everyone would know what is taking place and results would be much more severe.

Two GVN subcommittees have been appointed to work out the necessary and indispensable measures to accompany piaster yield change: First to review and make adjustments in customs tariff and second to recommend further fiscal reform measures. These committees directed to report within 45 days and therefore new rate cannot be placed in effect before that time. Net reduction will result in "other taxes" on imports to achieve new average yield of 14 piasters per dollar (in contrast present yield these taxes of 17 or 18 piasters per dollar on sliding scale from low tax on essentials to higher tax on less essential goods). Subcommittees also working on problem of recapturing windfall profits resulting from new piaster yield approach and measures to increase yield from other than import taxes.

All addressees will recognize indispensability of maintaining secrecy about new piaster yield approach until officially announced by GVN.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5–MSP/8–2561. Secret; Priority. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd, Bangkok, Phnom Penh, London, Vientiane, and Paris.

2. Thuan presented piaster yield decision in context projected budget for calendar year 1962 showing expenditures 23.4 billion piasters and receipts 20.5 billion piasters. Budgetary breakdown as follows (in billions piasters): Expenditures consist of regular civil budget 8.6, security (including civil guard and self defense corps and gradual increase in armed forces during 1962 from 170,000 to 200,000) 10.6, continuation USOM economic projects 0.8, extra budgetary accounts (export subsidies and compensation account expenditures) 2.0, one-half of 18-month emergency economic and social program proposed in Staley Report 0.9, and one-half of 18-month long range economic development program proposed in Staley Report 0.5. Receipts consist of counterpart of US-financed commercial aid at official 35 rate 5.9, internal fiscal receipts 4.5, and import taxes (new economic development and defense taxes of 25 piasters per dollar and other taxes of 14 piasters per dollar) 10.1.

In calculating above receipts GVN projects import program of 259 million dollars consisting of commercial aid 169, PL 480 12.7, and GVN's own foreign exchange 73.8. Under questioning, however, Thuan stated clearly that GVN decision to go to 74–1 yield was not conditional upon US aid figure used in projected budget. He said aid figure used is simply one chosen by GVN because it has to use some basis for calculating US aid in making its budgetary projections. Thuan also stressed that average piaster yield is maximum GVN can do, thus indicating that if actual US aid is less than amount projected in budget GVN will have to cut back on program.

Thuan said that internal receipts item in budget represents increase of 1 billion piasters over 1961, thus showing GVN's intention to implement SFG report recommendation on tax reform as well as exchange reform recommendation. When questioned re gap of 2.9 billion piasters in budget he said GVN would try meet as much as it could by other two SFG report recommendations: Victory bonds (perhaps up to one billion) and National Bank advances, which has lowest priority of any of methods to be used for financing budget.

Budget being analyzed and our detailed comments will follow. [2]

3. I congratulated Thuan on adoption joint report [3] breakthrough concept, as reflected in 1962 budget. I explained we could make no decision at this time re US aid level because Congress has not yet completed action on aid legislation. I also said that my approach toward aid level problem was to let joint experts report criteria be sole guide, since I saw no possible way of choosing realistic import figure at this time. I indicated I was not sure whether Washington would agree with this approach, and in any case we

[2] Apparently a reference to Document 126.
[3] See Document 93.

would shortly have to come up with a temporary figure which, as I envisaged, would be subject to revision after several months in light of experience. I also pointed out that in addition to commercial aid DLF offered possibilities for financing import of capital goods, and could under certain circumstances be used to generate piasters for current government use. Got no reaction to this.

Thanh was reluctant agree to my proposed approach of fixing only temporary aid level figure because he foresaw various practical difficulties such as delays in goods arrivals pending agreement on final figure, speculation and price increases. I believe however he eventually acceded to approach we proposed, particularly because of emphasis we place on flexibility given to field in President Kennedy's letter to President Diem. [4] Thanh stated however that for practical purposes review of temporary aid level would have to come well prior to expiration of 6-month period.

Thanh told us that GVN calculates new piaster yield approach will cause only 4 percent increase in cost of living of lower classes. He underlined however importance prompt arrival of adequate quantity of imports to avoid greater effect on cost of living and adverse political repercussions.

Thanh asked specifically about addition petroleum products to list eligible commodities for US financing. Gardiner replied he saw no problem in this.

4. Thuan raised problem of extent to which piaster proceeds of aid should go into counterpart account under new piaster yield approach. He expressed awareness of congressional problems on this score, but asked that we also take a sympathetic look at GVN's public relations problems and vulnerability to Communist attack if apparent US hold on Vietnamese economy becomes too evident from budget. He proposed that out of new piaster yield of 74 per dollar 60 go into counterpart fund (which would be real improvement over present deposit rate of 43), but that 25 be released automatically for military budget and emergency development expenditures just as 7 out of current 43 is released automatically for military budget. We replied that we understood GVN concern; that this is primarily congressional and legal problem and we would see what we could do to accommodate GVN as much as possible. Shall submit recommendations on this point.

5. Thuan requested that 30 percent of total US commercial aid be exempted from buy American provisions. We also promised we would see what could be done on this score. I said that perhaps we could ask Washington to delegate authority to US in Saigon to go up to 30 percent but on basis case by case decision.

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[4] Document 114.

6. Will submit shortly our further ideas on how best to move in light this major step on part GVN. I took occasion to reiterate US assurance that "increased piaster realization per dollar's worth of imports will not be used as reason for reducing the American share of our joint efforts." (Deptel 140) [5]

Nolting

[5] Document 113

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125. Letter From the Secretary of State to the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Gilpatric) [1]

Washington, August 30, 1961.

DEAR ROS: I would like to acknowledge your letters of July 3 [2] and August 17 [3] dealing with the level of Vietnamese Armed Forces.

I am pleased that the increase from a 150,000 to a 170,000 man force level appears to be moving ahead of schedule and may be completed in November. Concerning the subsequent increase from 170,000 to 200,000, I have noted the President's suggestion in his letter of August 4 [5] to President Diem [4] that before increasing the level from 170,000 to 200,000 the two governments should be satisfied that there exists an agreed geographically phased strategic plan for bringing the Viet Cong under control, that the training and use of these 30,000 additional men will be based on such a plan, and that the rate of increase will be phased to Vietnamese absorptive capacities.

Your letter of August 17 states that a force level of 200,000 men appears adequate to the Defense Department for the foreseeable future. In the best of circumstances, the 200,000 man level will probably not be reached until May or June 1962. Since this is so far in the future and due to the main threats faced by Viet-Nam, I propose that the question of a further increase above 200,000 men

[1] Source: Department of State, S/S–NSC Files: Lot 72 D 316, NSAM's. Secret. Drafted by Wood.

[2] Document 82.

[3] In this letter Gilpatric wrote that the Department of Defense considered a force of 200,000 adequate for the foreseeable future. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5–MSP/8–1761)

[4] Document 114.

be carefully reviewed by the Viet-Nam Task Force during January 1962. Their recommendations should be based on the situation then existing in Viet-Nam and in Southeast Asia. A recommendation made then would still allow time for preparation, if it should be decided to support a further increase above 200,000.

It is most satisfying to read of the recent victories of the Vietnamese Armed Forces. I hope they will be able to maintain their initiative and that their victories will be followed by increasingly effective civic action.

Sincerely yours,

Dean

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126. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, August 31, 1961.

304. Task Force VN. Re Embtel 277. [2] On question of level of supporting assistance (commercial aid) to GVN in light of GVN's decision on piaster yield, I would like to submit following analysis of situation and general recommendation.

It seems to me we are in a fair way now to mount a "breakthrough" program, to finance it, to accelerate momentum and to carry it forward. There are many clouds on the horizon, not the least of which is Laos, but locally the skies are clearing somewhat and both governmental and public morale have been improved by recent military successes and hopes for the future. We will lose a great opportunity if we do not follow this up rapidly. As Task Force Washington knows, GVN is capable of adopting paper plans and then failing to follow through unless and until the money is in hand (CF agreement last spring to augment military forces by 20,000, which was slowed in implementation pending agreement on 1961 budget and means of financing).

It thus seems to me essential to follow through as promptly as possible on tentative aid level for FY 1962, in order to give the assurance to GVN necessary to start carrying out emergency eco-

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/8-3161. Secret; Priority. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Document 124.

nomic and social programs recommended in CIP, presidential program, joint experts report, draft joint communiqué, etc., as well as carry on with build-up of armed forces. [illegible]inue to think that we should set relatively high targets for commercial imports under the agreed criteria, leaving it up to the GVN to justify their estimates re absorptive capacity, etc., and on clear understanding that estimates are subject to revision in light of experience. If we do it the other way, and set conservative estimates which can be revised upwards in light of experience, I am of the opinion that some, perhaps many, of the essential breakthrough programs will be delayed by GVN foot-dragging, perhaps beyond the critical period. What is really involved here is a question of earmarking as possible additional aid for Viet Nam approximately $50 million of supporting assistance funds (based on figures cited Deptel 184).[3] This relates to a total aid program to Viet Nam of roughly a quarter of a billion dollars. Whether this 50 million can actually be used or not remains to be seen. I am strongly of the opinion that, when this matter comes to decision, presumably following passage of aid legislation, it would be in our national interest to earmark these additional funds and to tell GVN that they are available if they can be used under the agreed criteria. In this way, and I believe only in this way, can we keep up momentum which has been generated.

Foregoing discussed in Task Force Saigon. Task Force agrees with message, subject to following comments from Gardiner, which I am happy to attach for Washington's consideration:

1. Fully agree that further funding for capital goods meeting criteria should be provided within any reasonable limit, and have always counted on DLF to provide needed reserve.

2. Am skeptical about any substantial increase in commercial market demand for consumables and intermediate type goods such as tractors and trucks, in view very cautious attitude most firms handling such items and 2 years of overstocking already. This could change quickly if GVN continues present progress against VC.

3. Am convinced that govt planning for present conduct commercial aid program calls for forecast now of $140,000,000 new funds for FY 1962, including supporting assistance and PL 480.

4. Am always alert for any further demand for commercial aid funds required under present circumstances.

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[3] Telegram 184, August 12, furnished the Embassy certain suggestions and instructions regarding financial assistance to Vietnam. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5–MSP/8–1261)

5. Am dubious about advantages of allotting funds that will accumulate in PA's unlicensed or in licenses unutilized. [4]

Noting

[4] In telegram 321 from Saigon, September 5, the Embassy reported that Ambassador Nolting left for a visit to Bangkok and was embarrassed because he lacked any indication of the U.S. Government's reaction to the Government of Vietnam's decision to raise the total piaster yield to 74 per dollar and was therefore unable to transmit a response to Thuan. In telegram 275 to Saigon, September 6, the Department replied that it was "highly impressed and pleased" with the Government of Vietnam's decision but had delayed comment while it was seeking reaction from other U.S. Government agencies on the questions of counterpart, restrictive procurement policy, and commodity level. (Both telegrams *ibid.*, 751K.5–MSP/9–561)

127. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, September 5, 1961.

322. Task Force VN. More than 1,000 Viet Cong (two battalions) regular troops attacked and occupied two GVN posts at Poko and Dakha approximately 50 kilometers north of Kontum on September 1, announced Minister for Civic Action Ngo Trong Hieu at biweekly press conference September 4. According Vietnam press, Hieu stated one post retaken by GVN forces. Fighting still going on for second. Also reported 100 VC, 19 ARVN personnel killed in action so far.

Hieu said VC armed with modern weapons and, for first time, wore khaki uniforms into battle.

Comment: If number of VC as high as reported, this represents largest VC attack to date and possibly result of significant build-up VC forces this area recent months. Report of VC force being well-armed and uniformed also another possible indication VC efforts mold guerrilla units into more regular-type forces this region for use against larger GVN targets.

ARMA will report military details this operation. [2]

Cunningham

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/9–561. Official Use Only; Priority. Repeated to Bangkok, Phnom Penh, Vientiane, CINCPAC for PolAd, London, Paris, and Geneva for FECON. The Department of State was also asked to pass a copy to ACSI.

[2] The Army Attaché's report has not been found.

128. Memorandum From Robert H. Johnson of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) [1]

Washington, September 5, 1961.

SUBJECT

The President's UN Speech [2] and the Situation in Southeast Asia

As the discussion with the President last week [3] made very clear, it would be very disadvantageous to us to have a crisis in Laos or South Viet Nam at the height of the Berlin crisis. Khrushchev may also consider this a dangerous maneuver and seek to avoid it. He must be concerned with the convulsive reaction a double crisis could produce in the United States and also with its impact on the respective Chinese and Soviet roles in Asia.

Nonetheless, Khrushchev could see certain short range advantages in stepping up the level of Communist military activity in Southeast Asia. It seems to me that we can utilize the concern of the neutrals about the Berlin situation to help deter Khrushchev from taking military action in Southeast Asia. We can do this by making explicit ties between the two situations. I believe this might be usefully done in the President's speech to the UN.

Thus the President might in his speech say that it is in the interest of world peace—in the interests of the Bloc, the Western Powers and the neutrals—that the already very serious crisis over Berlin should not be complicated by a reopening of the war in Laos or by enlarging the scale of warfare in South Viet Nam. In order to show that this is a matter within the control of the USSR, the President would need to make clear that the struggles in these two countries are not simple indigenous struggles, but are wars supported by the Soviets and the North Vietnamese (with Soviet help) from outside. This would require the surfacing of evidence that we have been collecting.

Such a statement at the UN might be accompanied by a démarche to Khrushchev which would also point out our mutual interest in avoiding a war in Southeast Asia, call his attention to his understanding with the President at Vienna [4] that it was in our mutual interest that Laos be neutralized and make clear that, while

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[1] Source: Department of State, S/P Files: Lot 67 D 548, R. Johnson Chron: Secret.

[2] See Document 137.

[3] Apparently a reference to a meeting at the White House on August 29 regarding Laos. A memorandum of this meeting is in Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Southeast Asia Region.

[4] See footnote 2, Document 61.

we wish to avoid a fight, we are not prepared to stand by while he gobbles up either Laos or South Viet Nam. The pros and cons of these proposed courses of action may be stated as follows.

Pros

1. By tieing Berlin and Southeast Asia together in this fashion we could make use of some of the pressure that the neutrals are going to be exercising on both sides to come to a solution on Berlin to create some pressure on the Soviet Union not to complicate the problem further by undertaking a war in Southeast Asia. Khrushchev would have something additional to lose if he did step up the war in Southeast Asia.

2. We would be communicating to Khrushchev in an explicit way our recognition of our mutual interest in avoiding resumption of the military struggle in Laos in the midst of the Berlin crisis.

3. We would focus world attention on the crisis in Southeast Asia and thus: (a) suggest that it is potentially of as great significance as the crisis over Berlin; and (b) help avoid a situation in which the Communists manage to sneak away with Laos or South Viet Nam while world attention is focused on the Berlin crisis.

4. We would counter the argument that the Communists are beginning to make that we want to open a second front in Asia.

Cons

1. Khrushchev showed by his action on nuclear testing that he is not going to be deterred by neutral opinion. Having made that plunge he is even less likely to be so deterred in the future. (On the other hand, if the test decision was made for purely technical military reasons and overrode considerations of preserving a "peaceful" world political posture, he may be more sensitive than ever to political considerations of this kind.)

2. The USSR may lack the power of decision with respect to Laos and Viet Nam. Communist China and North Viet Nam can force the Soviet hand. (With the Chinese and the North Vietnamese in difficult economic straits, however, the hand of the USSR should be strengthened.)

3. The situation in Southeast Asia is so muddled that it is going to be very difficult to place responsibility upon the USSR for any resumption of hostilities in Laos or step-up of activities in South Viet Nam.

4. The proposed actions will suggest to the Russians that we are terribly anxious to avoid a fight in Southeast Asia in the midst of the Berlin crisis and will simply encourage them to step up the military struggle there in the hope that we will not respond. (But the

USSR must estimate already that we would like to avoid such a fight if we can. If, as proposed, we at the same time make clear that we will not stand by while they take over, the dangers suggested should be minimized.)

It should be noted that, with the exception of the last argument, these are arguments that the proposed action would be ineffective rather than disadvantageous. [5]

Robert H. Johnson [6]

[5] In a memorandum of September 15 to Rostow, Johnson wrote that even though Rostow had indicated he did not fully agree with the suggestion made in the September 5 memorandum, he was submitting some specific language for inclusion in the draft of the President's speech prepared by Schlesinger. Johnson's draft paragraph reads: "While we keep our eyes focused upon the efforts of the USSR to deprive West Berlin of its freedom we must not forget that the Communist countries are also engaged in an effort to impose their will from outside on the countries of Laos and Viet Nam. I say to the leaders of the USSR and I say to you all that the cause of peace will not be well served if an attempt is made to use the crisis over Berlin as a cover to divert attention from a major effort by the Communist countries to gain control of these countries by either creeping or direct aggression. Just as we shall improve the possibilities for peace in these countries by standing fast over Berlin, so the Communist countries will greatly complicate the problems of finding a peaceful solution to the Berlin problem if they choose this moment to attempt to take over all of Viet Nam and Laos." (Department of State, S/P Files: Lot 67 D 548, R. Johnson Chron: Sept. 1–Dec. 31, 1961) No reply by Rostow has been found.

[6] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

129. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, September 6, 1961—11 a.m.

323. From William Jorden. Task Force VN. Subject: Progress Report.

GVN authorities including Thuan have promised fullest cooperation our project. Small working group established through Dr. Tuyen with Dang Duc Khoi and Tran Tam assigned as joint counterparts to work with me in gathering assessing material. Have sorted thru cases previously submitted ICC and see need for fresher harder evidence. . . . friends on ICC doubtful of chances ever winning condemnation of DRV short of massive aggression by them

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5–MSP/9–661. Confidential.

but commission remains useful forum for initial presentation of such evidence as available.

Have asked get to scene of current fighting to see what is produced on spot in way evidence of subversion before it is sifted and scattered.

GVN officials feel they have missed boat in this whole area in past and are grateful our interest and help. They now talking in terms of setting up permanent group to gather evidence of subversion and to arrange for its dissemination through available channels. Question of possible US-GVN group to do job been raised but I have emphasized that I could not comment and that it would be matter for consultation through embassy. Have given personal opinion that it is primarily matter for GVN but that we prepared to help informally with advice, suggestions, etc.

Hopeful this week will produce something worthwhile. As you know time has different meaning this part of globe but think we are moving.

Cunningham

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130. Telegram From the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (McGarr) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Felt) [1]

Saigon, September 10, 1961—5:09 p.m.

MAGAG-CH 1473. 1. This dispatch reports mounting indications of significant increase in Viet Cong capabilities as evidenced by recent Viet Cong actions predominately in but not limited to Second Corps area and along Laos/Cambodian border and Central Plateau area. Indications strengthened by knowledge enemy now possesses virtual unrestricted access routes from North Vietnam through Southern Laos into highlands of South Vietnam where due to rugged terrain present RVNAF military posture limited in capability to effectively prevent or even detect infiltration of troops, arms and supplies in apparently increasing amounts.

2. Recent reports, though not confirmed and reliability undetermined cannot be completely discounted, indicate sizeable concentra-

[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Secret; Priority. Repeated to JCS, JACE AJCC, CINCUSARPAC, and ASCI DA.

tions of Viet Minh (Viet Cong) forces Southern Laos Vic SVN border. These include six Viet Cong battalions Attopeu area reported by RVNAF source, three to five Viet Minh (Viet Cong) battalions estimated at three thousand reported by MAAG Laos and CAS, Saigon through FAL sources as proceeding south from Tchepone area late July to Vic (YC 3218), RVNAF J2 order battle locates two Viet Cong battalions in Salient Vic (YC 4070), recent ARVN air recon reported new Viet Cong battalion in SVN Vic (YC 4924) in addition to many houses, guard towers, personnel activity in large area north and south Vic (YC 2580), and very recent RVNAF J2 report of C 4 evaluation described recent movement of ten thousand man force from northwest to Vic (YC 4317). RVNAF discounts size this force as does MAAG. Realized buildup taking place along Laos border but no indication force of that size at present.

3. Concurrent with indicated buildup Viet Minh (Viet Cong) forces South Laos, Viet Cong activity Second Corps area has recently increased in force size and frequency, and actions are more aggressive, better organized and directed against stronger civil guard installations and larger ARVN forces. Viet Cong units in recent actions this area are much better equipped than previously reported, armed with large percentage of submachine guns in addition to machine guns, automatic rifles, and mortars. Reliable RVNAF source states recent ARVN operation northwest of Ban Me Thuot clashed with regular Vietnamese Viet Cong company moving south from North Vietnam (credibility this report strengthened by fact that no reported Montagnards accompanied VC Company. Previous reports invariably describe large percentage of Montagnards accompanying company size force or larger). Same source reported that elements of a PAVN Division have already infiltrated war zone "D" northwest of Saigon, however unable to confirm at present.

4. July, August increase in size and aggressiveness of Viet Cong actions Second Corps culminated in three battalion (estimated one thousand) Viet Cong force attack against defense posts and reinforcing ARVN units north of Kontum on one and two September. RVNAF J2 after action reports states one Viet Cong battalion new to area and apparently came from across border. Subsequent to this action a rash of attacks have taken place in the plateau area to include overrunning of civil guard post at (YB 8040) on five September, attack against self defense corps post on hwy 19 near An Khe on six September, three separate platoon size attacks against ARVN forces in border area west of Hue on seven September, and overrunning of platoon at ARVN outpost northeast of Kontum (AS 9601) on nine September. Concurrent with these actions RVNAF J2 reports increased Viet Cong interdiction (road sabotage and harassing fire) of hwys 7, 14 and 19 in area with obvious objective of hindering

timely ARVN reinforcement against Viet Cong actions in plateau region.

5. MAAG Vietnam concludes that: An enemy controlled Southern Laos and porous GVN border in the North is permitting an accelerated infiltration of Viet Minh (Viet Cong) units, arms and other supplies and equipment of significantly greater proportions into South Vietnam; this infiltration is directly contributing to an apparent strengthening and expansion of Viet Cong secure areas in support of increased political subversive activity throughout the country under the North Vietnam controlled and directed national front for the liberation of South Vietnam. Given the present rate of Viet Cong military, economic and political growth, greatly assisted by infiltration support capability, out of country and in country indications exist pointing to a possible widespread increase in all forms of subversive activity this fall as the Viet Cong attempt to move into their final phase program of overthrowing the present government. While we not unduly apprehensive at present felt you should be advised this degree increased activity plateau area over short period time as this activity could be accompanied by possible larger scale Viet Cong military operations end rainy season.

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131. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President [1]

Washington, September 15, 1961.

SUBJECT

Southeast Asia

General Taylor and I were briefed this morning by General Craig who toured Southeast Asia at the instruction of General Lemnitzer to make an evaluation on the ground. [2] They did a thorough job. There was nothing new in their presentation of the facts except, perhaps, their emphasis on the build-up of Pathet Lao-Viet-minh forces in Southern Laos and the beginnings of additional pressure on Central Vietnam from that area. They concluded

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Regional Security Series, Southeast Asia—General. Secret.

[2] A 16-page briefing paper prepared by General Craig and dated September 15 described the visit of his 5-man team to Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia. (*Ibid.*)

by recommending the implementation of SEATO Plan 5 now—or if that is not possible, the execution of preparatory measures such as laying the command and logistic base and moving closer to Laos the foreign troops who would take part.

Diem believes that Hanoi takes the view that the end of Stage 2—in Mao's theory of warfare—has arrived; that is, the end of guerrilla warfare and the beginning of open warfare.

Their recommendations are now being studied by the JCS and we should receive them, as modified, next week. They underline our own anxiety by emphasizing that the rainy season will be over by 30 September.

One operational thought arises from this briefing; namely, that you use the occasion of the UN speech [3] to talk about Southeast Asia in some such terms as these:

"At this time we confront not merely a major crisis over Berlin but a situation equally dangerous to the peace in Southeast Asia. It has been my objective since assuming Presidential responsibility to seek by diplomatic means the negotiation of a truly independent and neutral Laos. This is clearly desirable in the interests of the Lao people, the peoples of Southeast Asia and of world peace itself. The situation as it now stands is dangerous not merely because we have only a precarious cease-fire in Laos; it is also dangerous because the territory of Laos is being used systematically to introduce external forces into South Vietnam. Only recently, moreover, the government of Cambodia announced a substantial engagement with Viet-minh forces operating from within its territory against the government of South Vietnam.

The United States is committed in Laos and in Southeast Asia generally to assist the governments of this region to maintain their independence. It intends to honor those commitments.

I was heartened when I spoke with Chairman Khrushchev in Vienna [4] at our agreement that Laos should become an independent neutral nation on the model of Burma and Cambodia. This would be a step forward. But the whole world community should understand that there is a danger to the peace in Southeast Asia to which it must devote constructive attention in coming days and months despite the more dramatic danger surrounding the Berlin question."

Note: It is important to nail Khrushchev on his Burma and Cambodia analogy. At one point a Soviet ambassador slid over to

[3] See Document 137.
[4] See footnote 2, Document 61.

using Poland as a model. In the latest Harriman talk with Pushkin,[5] Finland was referred to, which would be O.K.

WR[6]

[5] Apparently a reference to Harriman's informal talk with Pushkin on September 12, in which Harriman asked what kind of neutrality the Soviets had in mind for Laos and Pushkin replied "your kind" and pointed to Finland. (Telegram 882 from Rome, September 13; Department of State, Central Files, 751J.00/9–1361) See also footnote 2, Document 133.

[6] Rostow added the following handwritten postscript: "Gen. Taylor and I will meet on Saturday [September 16] with Alexis J. and Lemnitzer on Southeast Asia." Taylor's appointment book indicates that the three men met at noon on September 16 to discuss Southeast Asia. (National Defense University, Taylor Papers) No record of the substance of the conversation has been found.

132. Editorial Note

On September 17, the British Foreign Office announced the establishment in Saigon of an Advisory Mission to be headed by Robert G.K. Thompson, former Permanent Secretary of Defense in the Malayan Federation. According to the announcement, the Mission's function was to assist the Government of Vietnam in administrative and police matters. The United States Embassy in Saigon reported that the British announcement was "given little play here," but that it was encouraging that government officials at various levels, including President Diem himself, seemed more interested in the Malayan experiences than they had been in the past. (Telegram 414 from Saigon, September 28; Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5–MSP/9–2861)

The Embassy in Saigon had been furnished by the British Embassy texts of the draft announcement, unattributable background notes, and off-the-record replies to anticipated questions about the Mission. Among other things, this information indicated that the Mission was to be under the general direction of the British Ambassador, was to consist of four or five officers, and was to be purely civilian in its composition and activities. (Telegram 333 from Saigon, September 7; *ibid.*, 751K.5–MSP/9–761)

On August 24, Field Marshal Sir General Gerald Templer, who was British High Commissioner for the Federation of Malaya from 1952 to 1954, wrote to Maxwell Taylor a letter of introduction for Robert Thompson, who, he said, would be visiting Washington, Kuala Lumpur, and Singapore on his way to Saigon, where he was

expected to join the other members of the British Advisory Mission toward the end of September. Templer asked Taylor whether he would meet with Thompson during the Washington visit "so that you might give him your personal guidance and advice." (*Ibid.*, Vietnam Working Group Files: Lot 66 D 193, VN 1961 Presidential Program—Political) Thompson met with Taylor at 11 a.m. on September 19. (National Defense University, Taylor Papers, Appointment Book—T-609-69A) He also met with Lemnitzer at 3 p.m. that day. (*Ibid.*, Lemnitzer Papers, Journal—L-419-71) No record of the discussion at either of these meetings has been found.

In telegram 351 to Saigon, September 28, the Department reported that during his consultations in Washington, Thompson put forward several ideas that were used in Malaya to control the Communist insurgency. The "most immediately promising," according to the Department, were an amnesty resettlement plan to encourage Viet Cong defections and the possibility of denying food supplies to the Viet Cong, especially in the high plateau area where food was scarce and denial could be effective. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/9-2861)

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133. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, September 18, 1961—1 p.m.

373. Rome's 882 to Department from Harriman, repeated Saigon 2. [2] Ambassador Harriman's report of his discussion with Pushkin extraordinarily interesting. May I comment from angle of problem in South Vietnam?

1. The determining factor between preservation of independence of South Vietnam and eventual seizure of power here by commu-

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/9-1861. Secret; Priority; Limit Distribution-Noforn. Repeated to USUN for the Secretary, Rangoon, Paris, London, Bangkok, New Delhi, Vientiane, Geneva for FECON, Phnom Penh, Ottawa, and Moscow.

[2] Telegram 882, September 13, reported on Harriman's informal discussion with the Soviet representative to the Far East Conference, Pushkin, the previous evening in which Pushkin said, among other things, that the Soviet Union "could and would control North Viet-Nam" and that the North was ready to abide by the terms of a peace agreement reached in Southeast Asia. (*Ibid.*, 751J.00/9-1361) See also footnote 5, Document 131.

nists is very likely to be degree of communist infiltration across frontiers of Laos and Cambodia.

2. US already has very large investment in SVN in resources and prestige, and we have recently taken additional initiatives which add to our commitments to support this country. As result of these and through their own determination, effort, and sacrifice, SVN's prospects of survival and recovery have begun to look brighter.

3. These prospects are now being threatened by what may be approaching settlement in Laos. As frequently pointed out, factor in Laotian problem most intimately affecting SVN's chances is physical one of border control, of preventing amount of infiltration which will swamp this country. It is also, in part, problem of political morale and faith in US long-term intentions, but physical defense problem is the greater and more immediate concern.

4. Facts are that Viet Cong are at present increasing their infiltrations into SVN through Laos, and indications are that they plan to step this up substantially. North Vietnam's announced intention is to take power here within short period of time, and this objective has received full public backing of Russia and Communist China.

5. GVN potential is sufficient to handle certain amount of infiltration, which is to be expected under set of circumstances, but insufficient to handle substantial increase. Substantial increase infiltration would, I think, eventually result in communist victory here, perhaps in stages, perhaps by direct seizure of power.

6. If situation substantially worsens here, US will be faced with alternatives of sending US forces into SVN or backing down.

7. What happens in Laos will be, I think, determinant of whether we will be faced with these hard alternatives.

8. It was joint view of Brown, Young and myself (Bangkok's 345 to Department)[3] that a neutral Government of Laos, composed and equipped as presently envisaged, with a "strong" ICC, probably could not, even if it wanted to, do much to prohibit or control VC infiltration through its territory, at least during its "settling down" period and its forces would be too few and its focus of attention would be elsewhere.

9. I am thus forced to conclusion that a neutral Government in Laos as apparently now envisaged would, in all probability and within a relatively short period, cause us to face the alternatives of para six above in regard to SVN. (Young has already predicted consequences in Thailand.)

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[3] Telegram 345, September 7, reported on the conference in Bangkok of Ambassadors Nolting, Brown, and Young. (Department of State, Central Files, 751J.00/9–761)

10. While I realize it is late, disagreeable, and difficult vis-à-vis our European Allies to contemplate a change of course, it is my understanding that we have always held open the possibility of such a change. From viewpoint our interests in SVN (and, I believe, on balance in SEA generally), I urgently recommend consideration of a change in policy, directed towards partition.

11. Following up on Pushkin's statement to Harriman that USSR "could and would control northern Vietnam" re Laotian settlement, and his faint indication of possible Soviet interest in settling hostilities between two parts Vietnam, could we not put ourselves in position to put to Soviet Government something along following lines? Realize UK and France would find it hard to accept, but their Ambassadors here have separately expressed their concern to me re VC infiltration into SVN through a neutral Laos. Suggested line of approach to USSR:

(A) US has essential interests and commitments in maintaining independence of SVN and Thailand and we intend to defend them.

(B) Prevention of use of Laotian territory as corridor of infiltration into SVN and Thailand is necessary to carry out our policy and commitments.

(C) Exploration and negotiation at Geneva and with potential Laotian leaders, coupled with Communist actions vis-à-vis SVN, has convinced us that a neutral Lao Government as presently envisaged will not provide necessary protection to SVN and Thailand against Communist infiltration and guerrilla action.

(D) In face of long record and current evidence Communist action against GVN, we are not prepared to accept Soviet assurance that they will control Viet Minh, particularly with respect to preventing use of Laotian territory by North Vietnamese and other Communist elements against SVN and Thailand. (The relationship of USSR to Geneva accords of 1954 is essentially the same as that envisaged in negotiated accords re Laos. Soviet "praising" of Communist side re 1954 accords has consisted, with respect to Vietnam, in supplying, financing, training, and giving public support to attempt by North Vietnamese take over SVN, by force disguised as political revolution.)

(E) We have concluded that we will not agree to a settlement which, in our opinion, will leave our allies exposed to Communist infiltration, subversion, and armed attack, through manipulation or abuse of a neutral Laotian Government.

(F) We have decided to assure that territory adjacent to SVN and Thailand be kept in friendly hands, and we will do this if necessary in use of US forces, because of our interests and commitments in those countries.

(G) We would prefer to reach such a solution, amounting to partition, without use of force. If Soviet Union wishes to do so, and can control its allies as claimed, this result can be achieved at conference table.

(H) If USSR wants to broaden discussions and talk seriously about composing hostilities in Vietnam, we will put ourselves

promptly in position to do so, as part of over-all effort to reach satisfactory modus vivendi in SEA.

12. I realize that such a course of action would reverse our policy aimed at composing hostilities in Laos, unifying it and taking it out of arena of cold war. In light of history of Laotian negotiations, culminating in Pushkin's cynical remark that Laos could be "next to last" to be devoured, I cannot believe that a settlement along presently conceived lines will benefit our over-all position in this part of world. Even if communist bloc is not interested in taking over Laos at this time, are they not intent on taking over SVN and Thailand; and would not a neutral and necessarily weak Laos be a convenient tool for this purpose?

The above was gestated and written before receipt Ambassador Harriman's reports his recent conversations with Souvanna Phouma.[4] From what we have of those conversations, I see nothing which changes views expressed above.

Nolting

[4] Harriman held five formal meetings with Souvanna Phouma in Rangoon, September 15–17. Telegraphic reports on these meetings are *ibid.*, 751J.00. For text of Harriman's statement on the talks, issued at Rangoon on September 18, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1961*, p. 1022.

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134. Memorandum From the President's Military Representative (Taylor) to the President[1]

Washington, September 18, 1961.

1. You asked about the use of the guerrilla infiltration routes through Laos into South Vietnam. These routes have been in use intensively since the end of 1958 when the government of North Vietnam in effect declared guerrilla war on South Vietnam.

2. The Viet Cong (Communist guerrilla) strength in South Vietnam rose from about 2500 in September 1959 to 5000 in January 1960, and to an estimated 15,000 at the present time.

3. The percentage of these Viet Cong forces which have infiltrated from outside of the country, as compared with those who

[1] Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T–625–71. Confidential. A handwritten notation in the margin reads: "Read by HA [Higher Authority?] 19 Sept 61. MDT."

were recruited locally, is impossible to determine. However, it is known that substantial numbers have been entering South Vietnam from the north by way of Laos for a long time. General Craig, who has just returned from a visit to Southeast Asia with a Joint Staff team,[2] considers that, since the cease-fire last May, there has been a very large movement of guerrilla forces into the panhandle of Laos in anticipation of an over-the-border offensive against South Vietnam.

4. Although we hear most about the infiltration by land, there is a lively business in transporting guerrillas by junk along the seacoast from the north into South Vietnam. Although they are occasionally intercepted, this traffic in guerrillas goes on without too much difficulty.

Maxwell D. Taylor

[2] See Document 131.

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135. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State[1]

Saigon, September 20, 1961—7 p.m.

385. Task Force VN. Separate unclassified telegram[2] gives text GVN communiqué re Sept 17/18 VC attack Phuoc Thanh. Aside from supplement information reported through MAAG channels, Thuan told me Sept 19 estimated three battalions had participated in attack. He said initial estimates of GVN casualties were about 20, but subsequent information indicates they considerably higher than this.

Contrary to impression given in official communiqué, VC succeeded in capturing Phuoc Thanh and holding it several hours, during which they reportedly staged "people's trial" and executed

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/9-2061. Confidential. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd, Phnom Penh, Bangkok, Vientiane, London, and Paris. The Department was asked to pass a copy to ACSI.

[2] Telegram 384 from Saigon, September 20. (*Ibid.*)

province chief and chief assistant in market place.[3] While ARVN forces are pursuing contact with VC broken off.

Phuoc Thanh is first provincial capital temporarily captured by VC. Earlier attempt take over capital of Kien Hoa in April was frustrated by local authorities. However, province chief, said by Diem to be one of best, is second killed past 18 months, other being in Vinh Long last year.

Phuoc Thanh, which I recently visited with President, is new province. Provincial capital is small town on edge thickly forested Zone D (which has long been VC base). It was garrisoned primarily by CG with some ARVN support. Attack followed pattern recent incident North Kontum, and thick jungle around Phuoc Thanh provided VC with excellent cover for assault, although two Ranger companies in area at time.

This most recent incident, a considerable VC success, is most regrettable, but should be balanced against recent ARVN victories. It demonstrates that tide has not yet turned. Additional VC attacks in strength, perhaps even closer to Saigon, to be expected as infiltration through Laos continues and local recruitment maintained at high level. Civil Guard will probably remain preferred target until its capabilities improve.

Nolting

[3] Nolting recalled that he visited the province chief and his family the week before and was impressed by him as a vigorous and well-motivated official. Nolting had often wondered whether there was any connection between his visit and the Viet Cong overrunning of that village. (Department of State, Office of the Historian, Vietnam Interviews, Frederick E. Nolting, Jr., May 25, 1984)

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136. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam[1]

Washington, September 22, 1961.

337. Joint State–Defense message. Task Force VN 14, 15 and 19—Emergency Assistance.[2] It is estimated here that deterioration

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/9–2261. Secret; Priority; Limit Distribution. Drafted by Wood, cleared with Haydn Williams, Cottrell, McConaughy, U. Alexis Johnson, and G/PM, initialed by Cottrell for the Acting Secretary, and repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Reference is to the numbered paragraphs in Document 56.

Laos, end rainy season, scale September VC attacks which took such heavy toll of CG and SDC and probable effect on GVN morale require US take certain emergency actions within 30 days. Purpose to assist your current efforts to prevent establishment VC political/logistic base on VN territory near Lao border, to handle increased VC border crossing, and to maintain an offensive momentum against VC.

Those responsible conduct military program are urged request additional matériel and personnel assistance above currently approved programs if required in light considerations set forth above. Favorable consideration can be anticipated.

Request CINCPAC and Saigon Task Force give particular but not sole attention to additional measures to be taken within 30 days receipt your comments and GVN concurrence.

Request your suggestions as to acceleration deliveries selected items already in program plus additional items, for example those on following suggested list on which your comments requested:

Suggested Equipment and Personnel

A. *For ARVN, Civil Guard, Self Defense Corps*

1. Accelerate training for Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps.
2. Night illumination devices for use by patrols.
3. Additional dogs and handlers (possible sources: Lackland AFB, Malaya, UK and Germany).
4. Portable communication devices enabling patrols to maintain voice contact.
5. Self-sterilizing mines to seal off strategic trails.
6. Mines to protect outposts.
7. Barbed wire.
8. Delivery improved small arms for selected ARVN units. Small arms which would then be released from these units to be turned over to Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps. In addition, a substantial increase in delivery of firearms to Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps. If delivery presently scheduled firearms cannot be substantially increased within 30 days, suggests supplement by others such as armalites, carbines and/or riot guns.

Purpose items 2, 3, 4 to give ARVN patrols further confidence and aggressiveness to move out at any time and under any conditions—including, if agreed, probes into Laos.

B. *For VN Air Force (VNAF)*

1. Delivery additional Caribou and/or other type STOL aircraft for re-supply plus defoliant, manioc (tapioca) killer and bulldozers for clearing in frontier area. US crews to train RVNAF crews.
2. Tetrahedron for use against VC in open areas on Lao, DMZ frontiers.

3. Delayed Napalm for use in sparsely settled jungle areas on Lao, DMZ frontiers.

4. Supplement present H–34 pilot and maintenance capability through Eastern Construction Company contract.

C. *Use Available Resources*

We are also anxious accelerate GVN progress toward increased and better use of existing resources such as AD–6's for close-in support, targets of opportunity and helicopters for vertical envelopment.

(Deptel 330 of September 21 [3] is to be read in conjunction with this message.)

Bowles

[3] In telegram 330, the Department of State requested that the Embassy submit as soon as possible its requirements for photographic and visual reconnaissance of the Vietnamese-Laotian border and the demilitarized zone and its recommendations regarding the type aircraft to be used, including RF–101's based outside Vietnam. (Department of State, Central Files, 751J.00/9–2161)

137. Editorial Note

In his address before the United Nations General Assembly on September 25, President Kennedy warned about the serious threats posed in Laos, South Vietnam, and elsewhere by Communist aggression. He asked the nations of the world to unite to preserve the peace and "save the planet, or together we shall perish in its flames." (*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1961*, pages 618–626)

138. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, September 26, 1961—7 p.m.

406. Task Force VN. Deptel 334. [2] VC attack near Banmethuot not yet mentioned in local press. ARVN commander in area told me following Sept 25 when I was visiting Banmethuot: 3 land development centers attacked Sept 18 and held for several days. Took supplies, burned schoolhouses and administration buildings, and terrorized people. GVN armed forces column sent in by foot, supporting air drop prevented by weather. VC withdrew into mountain redoubt before GVN troops arrived. Only GVN action against VC was bombing of line of retreat.

Additional details furnished by International Voluntary Service employee stationed Banmethuot as follows: Purpose of VC action, reportedly involving up to two regular VC battalions accompanied by several hundred additional local guerrillas, said to be capture of rice and supplies from Vietnamese settlements 20 miles southeast Banmethuot at Ban Ti Srenh, Ban Yang Bong, and Ban Kron Kmar (BP 18). VC overwhelmed Civil Guard post at Ban Mgha [*sic*] (BP 3481) Sept 18 on way to settlement villages. Villagers said to be forewarned and managed to hide most of rice from VC; badly outnumbered local SDC members also hid guns and uniforms upon approach of VC.

Full details results and casualty figures not yet known.

Comment: Failure local press to mention this operation probably indicates some GVN reluctance admit such large VC concentrations able operate this area without effective countermeasures by GVN, particularly after well-publicized Sept 17/18 setback at Phuoc Thanh (Embtel 385). [3] Also, information this action still sketchy possibly because rough terrain makes communications particularly difficult.

Significant that VC not only able operate regular units this size but also reportedly can assemble local guerrilla forces in sizeable numbers when needed for local operations. While former contain many Vietnamese, latter said to be predominantly Montagnards,

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/9-2661. Confidential; Priority. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd, Bangkok, Vientiane, and Phnom Penh. The Department of State was also asked to pass a copy to ACSI.

[2] Telegram 334, September 22, noted that the Department of State was receiving press queries about a recent Viet Cong attack 20 miles south of Banmethuot and asked the Embassy for comments and press guidance. (*Ibid.*, 751K.00/9-2261)

[3] Document 135.

another indication continued VC success in influencing mountain peoples.

Nolting

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139. Memorandum From William J. Jorden of the Policy Planning Council to the President's Military Representative (Taylor) [1]

Washington, September 27, 1961.

SUBJECT

Some Observations on Countermeasures against Viet Cong activities in Vietnam

At the suggestion of Lt. Cdr. Bagley, I am submitting the following thoughts concerning possible steps for countering the extensive and growing infiltration and subversion effort of the Viet Cong in South Vietnam. They are based on three weeks of observation and study of the subversion problem in Vietnam. I make no pretensions to expertise in this field. It should be noted that the focus of my work in Vietnam was on the problem—the nature and extent of the Viet Cong's infiltration effort with particular emphasis on the evidence of North Vietnamese involvement—and not on existing or possible countermeasures. Nonetheless, I am happy to submit for your consideration some random observations on possible steps for meeting this obvious threat to security in South Vietnam. Included are a few suggestions on related matters that General Taylor may wish to consider.

The problem: We delude ourselves if we visualize the Viet Cong effort in the South as primarily a movement of large, organized units across the GVN borders. It is apparent that the VC rely on local recruitment, both by persuasion and by terror, for the bulk of their organization. However, movement by units occurs and appears to be on the increase. It is also clear that the infiltration routes are used

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-016-69. Confidential. Also transmitted to the White House under cover of a memorandum from Battle to M. Bundy dated October 4, in which Battle wrote that copies of the memorandum were being sent to U. Alexis Johnson, McGhee, McConaughy, and the Operations Center for the Vietnam Task Force. Battle also stated that the "information and opinions in this memorandum have been cleared in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs but are personal observations and do not necessarily represent Departmental policy."

for transfer from the North to the South of military supplies, medical equipment, and other matériel, as well as of agents, trained cadre and unit leaders.

The most important infiltration routes are: by sea; across the demilitarized zone, particularly the mountainous and heavily forested western portion; mountain trails through Laos, thence eastward across the border into South Vietnam; from "safe areas" in Cambodia across the Vietnam border.

Countermeasures:

1. Junk operations—GVN intelligence sources report that these are extensive and operate under the control of a special VC maritime unit operating out of Vinh and Dong Hoi. Some junks have been picked up with VC agents aboard. My impression, however, is that the interception effort is limited and largely ineffectual. I do not minimize the problems involved. Large numbers of South Vietnamese fishing junks operate in the coastal waters and it is not easy to separate them from one on a VC mission. A successful effort would involve new equipment, trained personnel, close liaison with shoreside intelligence operatives, and the like. But surely this is a problem not beyond the reach of the world's greatest naval power.

2. River operations—This is closely related to 1 above. Large areas of South Vietnam, particularly the southern delta region and the provinces southwest of Saigon, are laced with rivers and internal waterways. The sea and other water routes are used by the VC for supply, transport and escape. Control over waterways permits the VC to extort tribute from the peasants who use them or to force the farmers to use the longer and more expensive overland routes to get their crops to markets.

GVN authorities do not have the kind of equipment they need to operate against the VC on the waterways. The province chief in Kien Hoa, for example, told me he had one slow and rickety wooden patrol boat for this purpose and that it was a "sitting duck" for small arms fire any time it came within range of a shoreside VC base. He asked for one or more armored patrol craft months ago. The result to date: Nothing. He knows of one fairly large VC base in his province, but he is convinced that it would be useless to attack it by land if the waterway escape route is open.

This too, would seem to be an area in which ingenuity and a modest investment in equipment might produce significant dividends.

3. Infiltration routes—These are fairly well established: from Thu Lu across the DMZ and southward into central South Vietnam; from the same area, southwest and thence along the Lao-Vietnam border and into South Vietnam; through Tchepone (a major VC base

in Laos), thence southeastward across Laos and into SVN; a route farther west through Saravane and across the border northwest of Kontum; one from Attopeu, another major base area, across the border west of Kontum. There are others.

Small, special forces units should be able to carry out successful ambushes along these trails. Even more promising might be quick "hit and run" strikes at sub-stations along the secret trails. The stations are fixed areas where VC personnel are fed and rested after each leg of their journey into the south. Given the rough terrain and the quality of VC field intelligence, such strikes could only be carried out successfully by small, highly mobile, and rugged units capable of operating without base support and in the best guerrilla tradition. Hitting the sub-stations could damage the effectiveness of an infiltration trail for some time, considering the difficulties of resupply in that terrain.

To be most effective, ambushes and strikes along the trails should not be confined to South Vietnam itself but should push over into Laos and possibly into Cambodia though the political problems in the latter case are significant.

4. Base areas—The VC operate from a number of bases in Laos between the 17th parallel and the Cambodian border. A few hard-hitting strikes at these bases by tough, special forces outfits could disrupt or at least harass VC operations in that area. The effect such moves would have on the ceasefire and the situation within Laos itself would have to be considered.

5. Field intelligence—This continues to be one of the glaring weaknesses of GVN operations. Reports on VC operations and movements come in from the villages erratically and often do not reach the officials or military units that could use them. I gather that the three major VC operations this month, north of Saigon and in the highlands, came as complete surprises to the GVN. Authorities in the field are acutely aware of this problem but I doubt that we can urge improvement in intelligence operations at the village level too often or too emphatically.

Related to this, there is room for vast improvement in the system by which a village or hamlet under VC attack can inform quickly the district, provincial or military zone authorities. I gather there has been an extended delay in working out and supplying some form of simple alarm system.

6. Radio locators—The VC use radio extensively for their contacts with regional headquarters and with the North. Successful strikes at their transmitters and receivers could deal a crippling blow to their communications net. I was told by several Vietnamese that the locator equipment now in use defined an area far too large for a successful strike. Without knowing what has been done or what

may be contemplated in this field, it would seem to be an area where effective counteraction against the VC could be improved.

7. Air operations—This is the one field in which the GVN enjoys total superiority over the VC. There is some question whether this superiority is being exploited fully. I visited the Kontum area immediately after the VC attacks on Dakha and Poko at the beginning of September. I was told that the VC had been able to withdraw in good order to the north to a safe area in the mountains taking with them all their own wounded, a number of prisoners and stocks of captured equipment. This movement sounded to me like a prime target for aerial interdiction. I am not aware that there was any effective use of air strikes against the VC during the battle, which lasted several days, or during their organized withdrawal.

Are we making maximum use of our potential for aerial reconnaissance in Vietnam and along the border areas? Is the GVN using its limited air potential to full effectiveness? How good is the system of ground-air liaison? These are some of the questions that occurred to me.

8. Uniforms and equipment—Several Vietnamese officers told me that the equipment they were receiving from the U.S. was not well-suited to the kind of fighting that ARVN and the Civil Guard were engaged in in much of the country. This refers particularly to the lowlands and delta regions. Our fatigue uniforms are heavy enough in themselves; after five minutes in a paddy field or canal they absorb water like a sponge and weigh the wearer down. Combat boots are heavy, too, for people used to light or no footwear; in the paddies, they become anchors that sink into the mud. What is needed is some kind of light uniform, preferably of synthetic material that does not absorb water, that dries quickly and can be kept clean with ease. Light sneakers are preferred to heavy boots and some Vietnamese think no shoes at all would be the best for getting through the paddies quickly. That is the way the VC operate, and they do pretty well!

In any case, this is a matter that could be worked out in consultation with the Vietnamese. In the highlands, the requirements probably would be different from those in the delta. I gather the Vietnamese would still like one neat uniform and shiny boots for garrison and parade—but not for fighting. The easy way is to give them equipment from our surplus stocks; it probably is not the best way, considering the job they have to do.

I said at the outset I have no claim to expertise in the above matters. This is but a collection of observations and ideas that come

to mind as I review my recent visit to Vietnam. I hope they are of some use.

William J. Jorden[2]

[1] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

140. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson) [1]

Washington, September 29, 1961.

SUBJECT

Contingency Planning for Southeast Asia

The President, in his speech to the United Nations on Monday, [2] stated that:

"The very simple question confronting the world community is whether measures can be devised to protect the small and the weak from such tactics. For if they are successful in Laos and South Viet Nam, the gates will be open wide."

As I indicated to you in a conversation immediately following the speech, I think that it is important that this element, as well as other elements of the speech, be followed up with specific action.

In this particular case, you may wish to embrace this problem within contingency planning for Southeast Asia. Our planning for both an overt break in the ceasefire and for continued ambiguous aggression ought to consider the need for making the case against the Communists in advance by forcing the international community to address itself to the problem of outside intervention in Laos and Viet-Nam.

We tend to assume, perhaps, that a break in the ceasefire would present us with a nice clean-cut case for intervention. But, in view of the fact that Phoumi is regularly engaged in low-level actions against the PL/KL forces, it seems quite possible that the Communists will seize on one of these actions to break the ceasefire. In such a circumstance we

[1] Source: Department of State, S/S–NSC Files: Lot 72 D 316, NSAMs. Secret. Initialed by Rostow.

[2] See Document 137.

will have difficulty convincing the world that the implementation of Plan 5[3] is really justified. In fact, we might have great difficulty in getting the British to agree to implement Plan 5 under these circumstances. We need to make as much of our case against the Communists as we can in advance of any such situation. To do so, we need to involve the international community before the Communists act.

Similarly, in anticipation of the possibility that the Communists may exploit for propaganda purposes the actions that we may take to deal with indirect aggression, we need to build the case that will justify those actions when they become known.

I am not prepared to suggest a detailed plan of action. But to illustrate what I have in mind, actions of the following kinds might be considered:

a. Publish a white paper written by Jorden which would describe: (1) covert Communist aggression under the cover of the ceasefire in Southern Laos; (2) infiltration by the DRV from Southern Laos into South Viet-Nam (making clear that the real DRV objective is South Viet-Nam); and (3) DRV intervention in South Viet-Nam.

b. Go to the UN on the basis of the white paper and the statement in the President's speech and request an investigating commission to go to Laos and South Viet-Nam to look into our charges against North Viet-Nam. Make clear that this commission is not a substitute for the ICC's in Laos and Viet-Nam but is doing a job that is beyond the jurisdiction of either ICC.

c. If we felt that we could obtain such action by the UN, subsequently seek a resolution condemning North Viet-Nam's activities in Laos and South Viet-Nam.

d. Use the ICC's in Laos and Viet-Nam as secondary means of publicizing the case against North Viet-Nam, as well as the final stage of the Geneva Conference.

We would have to consider carefully whether we would want to ask the investigating commission to develop, and the UN to implement, specific recommendations for dealing with the problem. Our primary objective should be to justify our own subsequent actions. UN actions which accomplish little, but tend to deter us from taking action we consider necessary, would be clearly undesirable. But we might very well want a UN presence if we worked out an effective border control system for inside Viet-Nam (for example, a system employing a combination of defoliation with small guard posts and local informers along the lines described by Thompson[4]).

The object of all this, as I have indicated, would be to seize the international community of this problem, develop our case, and lay the basis for the actions that we ourselves may have to take.

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[3] See footnote 3, Document 104.

[4] Regarding Thompson's conversations with U.S. officials in Washington earlier in the month, see Document 132.

141. Editorial Note

For text of a paper entitled, "South Vietnam: Crisis and Short-Term Prospects," September 29, prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pages 258–290.

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142. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, October 1, 1961—10 a.m.

421. In course long discussion with Admiral Felt and party, General McGarr, and me yesterday evening, President Diem pointed the question. He asked for a bilateral defense treaty with the US. This rather large and unexpected request seemed to have been dragged in by the heels at the end of a far-ranging discussion, but we discovered upon questioning that it was seriously intended and was put forward as result of Diem's deep fear of outcome of Laotian situation, SVN's vulnerability to increased infiltration, and his feelings that US action under SEATO Treaty vis-à-vis SVN would be inhibited by attitudes of other SEATO allies, especially UK and France, as in case Laos.

I told President Diem that question he had raised had a number of important angles, including effect upon SEATO, and I thought we needed to sit down together and discuss all aspects very frankly and thoroughly, to which he agreed. In later conversation with Thuan, I repeated this, and he understands, I think better than Diem, some of the thorny points involved.

Fuller report of our discussion with President Diem will follow. [2] Purpose this message is to get quick preliminary reaction from Washington on Diem's request (which he described as a "bilateral treaty like the one with Taiwan" [3]). I will see him again at Hue on

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 611.51K7/10–161. Secret; Niact. Repeated to Bangkok, Vientiane, CINCPAC for PolAd, London, Paris, Geneva for FECON, Phnom Penh, Ottawa, and New Delhi. Also printed in *Pentagon Papers: Gravel Edition*, vol. II, pp. 649–650.

[2] Despatch 158 from Saigon, October 10. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5811/10–1061)

[3] A mutual defense treaty signed at Washington, December 2, 1954; for text, see 6 UST 433.

Tuesday[4] and he may raise subject again. In any event, it would be better to pick up question promptly, I think.

Our own preliminary reaction is that this request should be seriously and carefully treated to prevent any feeling on GVN's part that US not serious in its intention to support SVN; but we see major issues involved, including overriding Article 19 Geneva Accords, possible ratification problems, as well as effect on SEATO.[5]

Diem's frame of mind which led to this request derives evidently from his feeling that policy we are pursuing in Laos will expose his flank to Communist infiltration to such an extent that large-scale hostilities in SVN are predictable. He is thus seeking a more binding US commitment than he now thinks he has through SEATO. By the same token, I think a change in US policy vis-à-vis Laos, especially a SEATO decision to use force there if necessary to protect SVN and Thailand, would relieve the pressure for a bilateral treaty.

Nolting

[4] October 3. No record of this meeting has been found.

[5] In telegram 368 to Saigon, October 1, the Department told Nolting that Diem could be informed that his request would be studied "promptly and sympathetically" but that Article 19 of the Geneva Accords was certainly one of the problems to be considered. The Department also told Nolting, for his own information, that it might be possible to strengthen the U.S. commitment to Vietnam under the SEATO umbrella, specifically under Article IV of the SEATO Treaty. (Department of State, Central Files, 611.51K7/10–161) For text of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam, signed at Geneva on July 20, 1954, see *Foreign Relations*, 1952–1954, vol. XVI, p. 1505. For text of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, signed at Manila on September 8, 1954, see *American Foreign Policy, 1950–1955: Basic Documents*, vol. I, pp. 912–916.

143. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State[1]

Saigon, October 2, 1961—8 p.m.

427. Task Force VN. Deptel 337.[2] Task Force Saigon appreciates reftel and offer of assistance in obtaining and expediting delivery R and D equipment as well as personnel within next thirty days. We share your sense of urgency. Principal cause present stage develop-

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/10–261. Secret; Priority; Limit Distribution. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Document 136.

ment situation here is significant build up VC strength inside South Vietnam by infiltration, terrorism and some conversion as well as greatly added enemy capability to increase presently stepped up rate infiltration due to build-up for Laos which has resulted in Communist control and occupation Lao territory along Lao-South Vietnam border.

Tactics, techniques and conventional as well as special types equipment are highly important to struggle here. However, basic fact is that for some time to come, SVN, in spite recent approval for additional troop strength, does not and will not have sufficient trained military forces to counter Communist build up guerrilla strength within its borders and currently across its borders in Laos. This due to lead time for training newly inducted men. Suggestions in Deptel 337 have been under consideration and in many cases action towards implementation has been taken.

Task Force in conjunction with GVN will continue actions designed preclude formation Communist political and logistical base in SVN. It will also continue assist GVN with strength available to slow down increasing infiltration from across its borders. May have further calls in line with spirit of reftel. Meanwhile, here is where we stand on items mentioned:

A1. In Aug 1961 MAAG prepared master training plan [3] which included training concept for CG and SDC units. Summary on plan forwarded to RVNAF for comment. We are pressing for reply from RVNAF and expect it soon. Needled Thuan again Sept 29. Anticipate result these efforts will be early implementation of sound program for training CG and SDC personnel and units as expeditiously as possible consistent with operational duties of ARVN, CG and SDC units. Request for part of necessary MAAG augmentation in support this training plan has already been forwarded CINCPAC. Request for balance will be submitted shortly.

A2. There are adequate quantities of flares, illuminating shells and ground signaling devices in country. MAAG has plans for testing sniperscope and image viewer in jungles and swamps of SVN. Necessary items for test being requested through R and D channels.

A3. Tests already conducted indicate that trained dogs will be of value in SVN. Additional dogs and handlers desired and being requested through R and D channels. Total 60 each will be used for large scale field testing. MAAG considers their greatest potential as sentries at static security sites.

A4. Only portable communication device for patrol use known to MAAG is radio. All radios presently authorized ARVN, CG and

[3] Not further identified.

SDC programmed. Expedite supply action has been requested and approved by CINCPAC and DCSLOG. Delivery has begun. In order increase effectiveness of patrolling recommend authorization and expedited delivery of following AN/PRC-10 radios over and above those presently programmed:

1 each per ARVN rifle company, total—251
4 per Ranger company, total—344
3 per Civil Guard company, total—1113
Grand total—1708.

A5. Action to obtain self-sterilizing mines for test under local conditions is under way.

A6. Sufficient mines for protection of outposts are on hand and programmed. MAAG continues place emphasis on their use.

A7. No shortage barbed wire and no need at present for expedited supply action.

A8. No shortage small arms in country, expedited supply action not indicated. Armalite looks promising in tests to date. For expanded testing under field and combat conditions action is being taken equip entire airborne brigade soonest.

B1. Several additional Caribou can be used good effect if contract crew and maintenance personnel provided also. Regarding defoliant initial tests have been successful and plans are already under way for use defoliant in Zone D and along Cambodian and Laotian borders and around static jungle outposts. This project being handled by CD and TC. Project is of such magnitude that request for spray planes from out-of-country is being formulated. Expedited supply action has already been requested on all bulldozers that can be effectively employed by the skilled manpower presently available in RVNAF. Additional bulldozers could be used start border clearing operations if operators, maintenance personnel and control organization provided also. However clearing any significant portion border would be mammoth undertaking.

B2. If tetrahedron available for issue or test request MAAG be informed of characteristics and availability.

B3. No requirement here for delayed napalm.

B4. No requirement for contract personnel to fly or maintain present H-34s or those programmed for CY 62 unless delivery latter can be and is expedited. Any additional increase over helicopters now programmed will require out-of-country resources for both piloting and maintenance. Main difficulty with use H-34s is in obtaining spare parts from CONUS in spite repeated requisitionings. (Same problem beginning to develop on AD-6 parts.)

D. Added Items.

D1. Terminal Guidance Beacon. Although this is R and D item, recent MAAG study of item indicates it can be used in its present form for target location and marking DZ's for paratroop and resupply operations. Separate action under way through R and D channels to obtain required beacons for airborne brigade and each corps and division.

D2. VT Fuses. MAAG believes VT fuses would be useful in many operations in SVN, including some along border, and therefore recommends that fuses proximity M513 and M514 be provided for operations use as soon as possible and initially in quantities of 3,000 and 1,000 respectively.

D3. Recent RVNAF requests for immediate air photo coverage of SVN as well as longer range photo requirements for TF Saigon will require greatly increased photo interpretation capability in country. Upwards 600,000 prints involved not counting long range requirements. Missions have already started and present limited RVNAF PI capability will be completely swamped as soon as first batch of photos arrive. Recent study here indicates only feasible solution is deployment to Saigon of U.S. Mobile Photo Interpretation Center. Recommend such unit be made available soonest.[4]

Nolting

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[4] A copy of this telegram was sent to Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Paul Nitze under cover of a letter, dated October 10, from Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Walter McConaughy. In that letter McConaughy wrote: "While I realize that providing these items may require some high level decisions in the Pentagon, I urge that these decisions be taken promptly in view of the very immediate dangers in Viet Nam." McConaughy also enclosed a copy of a memorandum, dated October 10, giving the Department of State's "understanding of the items desired, why they are needed and the problems involved." (National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-015-69)

144. Memorandum for the Record by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Bundy)[1]

Washington, October 5, 1961.

SUBJECT

Planning Group Luncheon, Tuesday October 3, 1961[2]

PRESENT

Mr. Rostow
Mr. Johnson
Mr. McGhee
Mr. Amory
Mr. Bissell
Mr. Fowler
Mr. Nitze
General Parker
Mr. William Bundy

1. *Viet-Nam.* There was a prolonged discussion of whether we were taking all the possible actions, and whether the existing organization was effective. Several specific measures were suggested, including the expediting of junk-force action and the lengthening of MAAG tours. On the broader front, the suggestion that talking direct to the Soviets might have some use was pretty unanimously rejected. The possibility of going to the UN, if the contents of the Jorden report were strong enough, was discussed as a real possibility. As far as the course of developments within Viet-Nam was concerned, there was a general feeling that on the present basis we were doing badly, and that the outcome would be unfavorable in the absence of a major change of course. (This discussion helped to trigger Mr. Rostow's proposal for SEATO forces in Viet-Nam, which is now under urgent JCS consideration.)

[Here follows discussion of Syrian-Egyptian relations and possible future subjects for consideration by the Planning Group.]

William P. Bundy[3]
Acting

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[1] Source: Department of State, Bundy Files, 1961 Chron. Secret. Copies were sent to Parker, Nitze, Rowen, Williams, and the Coordination Staff.

[2] Apparently at the instigation of William P. Bundy, an interagency group began to meet informally over lunch on Tuesdays in the summer of 1961 to discuss various foreign policy questions. Only Bundy's records of these meetings have been found. Some are in the Bundy Files at the Department of State, and others are scattered in the various files in RG 330 at the Washington National Records Center. No complete set of records of these meetings has been found.

[3] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

145. Memorandum From the Under Secretary of State (Bowles) to the Secretary of State[1]

Washington, October 5, 1961.

SUBJECT

The Situation in Southeast Asia

Averell Harriman is striving with great patience and skill to negotiate a settlement for "neutral and independent Laos."

Yet even if an agreement is reached on this difficult question, our position throughout Southeast Asia may grow steadily more precarious with a deteriorating military situation in Vietnam and a highly volatile political position in Thailand.

We should, therefore, look beyond whatever agreements may be achieved in Geneva to the broader implications of the rapidly deteriorating Southeast Asia power balance.

A direct military response to increased Communist pressure has the supreme disadvantage of involving our prestige and power in a remote area under the most adverse circumstances. There is no reason to assume that the Communists would limit their efforts to what we could contain with whatever conventional forces could be spared from other areas.

Therefore, we need an alternative *political* approach which may save us from having to choose between diplomatic humiliation or a major military operation. . . . .

Let us briefly consider the existing situation.

In Vietnam the government position is steadily weakening. An effective political base appears to be lacking and the Communists are in a position rapidly to increase their military pressure with every prospect for success.

As the situation in Vietnam deteriorates, we face the probability of a sharp reorientation of Thai policy and the strong possibility of a sudden switch in governments.

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, Schlesinger Papers, Chester Bowles. Secret. A copy of this memorandum was sent by Bowles to Schlesinger under cover of a memorandum of October 7, in which Bowles wrote that the memorandum had so far produced "a relatively negative reaction" at the Department of State and was only a summary of his private views. Bowles told Schlesinger that unless a political settlement was worked out early enough, he thought the United States might be forced to choose between "a major commitment of U.S. troops, with a rapid and disadvantageous escalation, or a precipitous retreat." (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/10–761) The same day Bowles also sent a copy of the memorandum and a similar covering memorandum to Adlai Stevenson, in which he wrote that the general response to his proposal, "as might be assumed, was a negative one, although George Ball and Averell were in agreement with me." (*Ibid.*)

Such a development is strictly in the Thai tradition. For centuries successive generations of Thais have prided themselves on their ability to assure their security by skilled negotiation. Each powerful new Chinese dynasty in its turn has brought pressure to bear on Thailand, and on each occasion the Thais have managed to preserve their sovereignty by paying some form of political tribute.

In the last part of the 19th Century and the early part of this one, the Thais played the French against the British. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, the Thai response was promptly to declare war on the United States the following day.

In view of the power position of their Chinese neighbor, the weakness of SEATO, and the deteriorating situation in Vietnam, it would be sheer folly to assume that history will not repeat itself.

Under present circumstances an upset in Thailand would be viewed as a major American defeat with grave implications both overseas and at home for our position in Germany and elsewhere.

In this complex situation I believe we should urgently consider what may be the only feasible *political* alternative: to expand the concept of a "neutral and independent Laos" to a proposal for an independent belt in Southeast Asia to include Laos, Burma, Thailand, South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Malaya. Such an arrangement might ultimately be guaranteed by the U.S.S.R., Communist China, India, Japan, and the SEATO powers minus Thailand.

It may already be too late in the day to achieve agreement on a proposal of this magnitude and complexity. In view of the situation in Vietnam, the Vietminh and the Chinese Communists may now feel themselves strong enough to reject any agreement, de jure or de facto, which does not leave Laos and Vietnam and ultimately Thailand, Cambodia, and Malaya, ripe for takeover.

However, it is not inconceivable that the Soviet Union may be prepared to accept and to impose on its allies a neutral Southeast Asian belt with a cease fire in Vietnam. In the absence of a stabilizing development of this kind, a massive Chinese intrusion into this area is likely sooner or later with the strong possibility of a major war into which the Soviet Union might be drawn.

It will be argued persuasively that the Communists would simply use such an arrangement as a screen behind which to maneuver a takeover of the whole area from within. No one can deny this possibility.

However, if the worst occurs and the Communists should proceed with their infiltration program in the face of an agreement for a neutral area, the responsibility would be squarely on their shoulders. We could then take whatever steps were indicated with the reasonable prospect not only of United Nations, but, even more important, of Indian and Japanese support.

Moreover, there is some comfort in the fact that Burma for the last fifteen years, with a weak government, a wobbly economy, and a thousand miles of border with Communist China has maintained an extraordinary degree of independence while refusing to align herself with either side.

The approach might be along the following lines:

1. Averell Harriman is already in touch with Pushkin at Geneva on matters implicating Vietnam. He has already broached to Pushkin the question of U.S.S.R. taking responsibility for preventing North Vietnam infiltration through Laos into South Vietnam.

These preliminary probes should be pursued. If they seem productive, Ambassador Harriman could be authorized, through fairly general instructions, to explore the possibility with Pushkin of reaching an over-all negotiated settlement involving the entire Southeast Asian area.

It has been suggested that the divided situation in Vietnam might be compared in general terms to that in Germany. We and the Soviets recognize that unification under present circumstances is not feasible. Our joint objective, therefore, should be to eliminate the fighting which could quickly spread and involve not only the United States and Vietnam but ultimately the U.S.S.R. and Peking.

Under the circumstances our common interest may best be served by looking beyond not only Laos but Vietnam and to the possibility of a neutral and independent Southeast Asia.

An alternative may be for you to open the subject in its broad implications in your next discussion with Gromyko.[2]

2. As soon as our negotiations or our planning have advanced to the appropriate stage, we should begin preliminary consultation with interested governments. This will not be easy. A United States policy for an independent and neutral Southeast Asia launched without careful preparation would deeply disturb our relations with Vietnam, the Philippines, and Taiwan (although most Thais might secretly welcome it, their public protests would be vigorous).

Yet in view of the ugly nature of the alternatives, I believe that this risk should be run, since the likely course of events under present circumstances may lead them and us into a setback with the gravest world-wide implications. If this setback should coincide with an intensification of the Berlin crisis, the impact on American public opinion and on our relations with the world would be grave indeed.

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[2] Rusk met in Washington on October 6 with Gromyko, who was in the United States to attend the 16th Session of the U.N. General Assembly. A memorandum of this conversation is *ibid.*, Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation: Lot 65 D 330, October 1961. There is no indication that Rusk broached the idea of a neutral and independent Southeast Asia.

3. There is a very real possibility that the situation will deteriorate too fast to permit these negotiations to be brought to a conclusion. If this occurs, a political contingency plan should be available which would enable us to move *publicly* for an independent neutral belt in Southeast Asia. The contingency planning should also study the ways in which the United Nations might be quickly involved if the situation begins to come apart precipitately.

I believe that time is of the essence. I suggest, therefore, that we meet with George Ball, Averell Harriman, and Alexis Johnson as soon as possible to discuss the implications of this approach.[3]

[3] No reply to this memorandum has been found.

146. Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Nitze) to the Secretary of the Navy (Connally)[1]

I–16, 883/61 *Washington, October 5, 1961.*

SUBJECT

Naval Patrol of South Vietnamese Coastal Waters

It is requested that you furnish answers to the following questions as soon as possible—preferably by noon Saturday, 7 October:

1. If the U.S. (presumably pursuant to a request from the government of South Vietnam) were to assist in patrolling the coastal waters of South Vietnam to help control Viet Cong infiltration by sea, at what distance from the shore could such patrolling be accomplished and be consistent with established precedents, i.e., avoiding creating a precedent which might operate to our disadvantage in the future?

2. (Depending upon the answer to the above question) could patrolling at such distance be effective in helping to control infiltration by sea?

3. Could a patrol action of this type be undertaken by U.S. naval forces presently deployed in the Pacific without unduly de-

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5411/10-961. Secret.

grading their capability to perform other currently assigned missions?

Paul H. Nitze [2]

[2] Printed from a copy that bears this stamped signature.

147. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, October 6, 1961—midnight.

445. Ref: Deptel 388. [2] I believe General McGarr is right man for the job. He is vigorous, sound, forthright. He has respect of, and excellent relations with, Vietnamese military officers all ranks. His credence with Diem may have diminished somewhat recently because he has been pushing hard for greater operational authority to military command, which Diem reluctant to give. But McGarr is still making headway with Diem and Thuan. I think change in Chief MAAG at this juncture would be a mistake, but suggest independent look and fresh imaginative ideas might be supplied by on-spot visit and inspection (10 days to two weeks) by General Maxwell Taylor, if possible.

Gardiner extremely knowledgeable this country and wide-range USOM projects, competent, devoted. He has accepted, though somewhat reluctantly, concept of "break-through programs", although temperamentally conservative and believing in long-term, self-help philosophy. I think it would be mistake to make change USOM director at this critical juncture. Prompt filling existing vacancies high-level USOM staff positions would, however, be most useful, as Gardiner's personal supervision all aid activities poses almost impossible task. Diem, Thuan, and other GVN officials have expressed to

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/10–661. Secret; Niact; Eyes Only Secretary.

[2] In telegram 388, October 5, drafted by Rusk and sent eyes only to Nolting, Rusk noted that deep concern in Washington prompted him to seek Nolting's "most candid assessment" of his principal colleagues, specifically whether McGarr and Gardiner were "the right men for the job" and whether they were able to "work effectively together." Rusk also said that apart from personnel matters, he would appreciate Nolting's "most urgent estimate" of the prospects in Vietnam and whatever "action you consider essential in Vietnam not to succumb to Viet Cong." (*Ibid.*, 751K.00/10–561)

me their impatience at USOM's slowness and rigidity. I am working with Gardiner to try to correct this insofar as blame seems to lie on US side; but GVN itself inclined to want the impossible in expecting us to fall in immediately with plans and programs often half-baked and frequently changed. Have told GVN friends this in effort develop better planning and execution on their side.

McGarr and Gardiner respect each other and work well together, subject only to differing professional emphasis. MAAG wants as many troops as possible as soon as possible. USOM has to foot the bill in local currency. Urgency of military requirements and sound economic practices necessarily conflict. McGarr is urged on by his authorities, Gardiner has been restrained by his. We try to strike a balance and to reach prompt task force agreements.

In brief, if we do not succeed here, I do not think it will be the fault of either McGarr or Gardiner. They understand each other and work reasonably well together.

In trying to boil down essentials of what needs to be done here to prevent Viet Cong take-over, I am more and more convinced, that first thing is to assure that the frontier with Laos be restored to friendly hands, willing and able to cooperate with GVN in preventing large-scale infiltrations. As indicated Embtel 373,[3] the only way I can see that this can be accomplished is through partition of Laos. I realize this presents most difficult problem to you. Up until September, I thought we were on upgrade here. Due to recent infiltrations, which stimulate Viet Cong internal recruitment and aggressiveness, GVN security forces now greatly overextended. This intensifies GVN tendency to procrastinate in developing and executing systematic counter-guerrilla plans, including needed rotational training of troops, and stimulates Diem's proclivity to run things on ad hoc basis. Situation now seems to me thin, brittle. While no recent rumors of military coup, one is likely in my judgment if infiltrations continue unchecked. Potential for further infiltrations in men and matériel known to exist in eastern Laos adds to apprehension of military leaders and government.

Two of my closest colleagues[4] believe that this country cannot attain the required unity, total national dedication, and organizational efficiency necessary to win with Diem at helm. This may be true. Diem does not organize well, does not delegate sufficient responsi-

[3] Document 133.

[4] When later asked who it was that he was referring to here, Nolting said that one of the two was definitely Mendenhall and the other was either Anspacher or Gardiner. When the same question was put to Mendenhall, he said that Nolting was likely referring to him and Gardiner. (Department of State, Office of the Historian, Vietnam Interviews, Frederick Nolting, Jr., May 25, 1984, and *ibid.*, Joseph A. Mendenhall, December 27, 1983)

bility to his subordinates, and does not appear to know how to cultivate large-scale political support. In my judgment, he is right and sound in his objectives and completely forthright with us. I think it would be a mistake to seek an alternative to Diem at this time or in the foreseeable future. Our present policy of all-out support to the present government here is, I think, our only feasible alternative.

This carries with it, of course, the opportunity to bring about such ameliorations as we can. I think we have better than 50–50 chance of winning on this policy line provided the border with Laos is reasonably well protected. If not, I think this government will go down, or out, and that this will probably hasten a Communist take-over here.

Nolting

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148. Diary Entry by the Chief of Naval Operations (Anderson), October 9, 1961 [1]

1400. The Joint Chiefs of Staff met . . . . [2] Relative to Southeast Asia, Mr. Bundy stated the proposal to put forces along the border was made for political reasons. Chiefs accepted this provided when actually in Vietnam they NOT be put on border. SecDef wanted a positive recommendation on South Vietnam which CNO provided: if we cannot go into Laos, we should go into South Vietnam, we should include SEATO. SecDef agreed, requested an estimate by Wednesday [3] of forces needed to eliminate Viet Cong . . . .

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[1] Source: Naval Historical Center, Anderson Papers, Diary. Top Secret.

[2] The omitted portion indicates that the Secretary of Defense joined the meeting at 2:30 p.m.

[3] October 11.

149. Memorandum From the Chief of Naval Operations (Anderson) to the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) [1]

Washington, October 9, 1961.

SUBJ

Naval Patrol of South Vietnamese Coastal Waters

REF

(a) ASD (ISA) Memorandum I-16883/61 of 5 October 1961 [2]

1. In response to the questions posed in reference (a), the following answers are provided:

a. If the U.S. assisted in patrolling the South Vietnamese coastal waters at the request of the Government of South Vietnam, there would be no legal restrictions that would hinder us notwithstanding the implications of the Geneva Accord of 1954. Our case would be based on South Vietnam's inherent right of self defense. Any measures taken at her request within her territorial waters (3 mile limit) would be justified by her sovereignty. The preponderance of traffic is carried in small boats close inshore in territorial waters under cover of darkness. If it is necessary to interdict such traffic in international waters, this can be justified under the same right of self-defense. Since this is an accepted, well established right, no undesirable precedent would be established.

b. Naval patrols could effectively help to control infiltration by sea. The radar search capability of such patrols would enhance the probability of detecting boats carrying Viet Cong infiltrators from North Vietnam. The details of carrying out an air-sea barrier should be left to the unified commander. He would probably wish to augment the South Vietnamese junk force with suitable U.S. forces.

c. The assignment of destroyers or patrol aircraft from the Seventh Fleet for patrol action of this type would divert them from the principal threat which they are designed to counter, namely, that of the Soviet submarines in the Western Pacific. However, they are available for any purpose.

2. Current information from the Chief of the Military Assistance and Advisory Group at Vietnam indicates that Viet Cong infiltration is mainly overland through Laos. Since the fall of Tchepone, Communist forces have had free access to the Vietnam border by this secure and well concealed route. He believes that the sea route is not used to any great extent to infiltrate military personnel or supplies but may be used to introduce agents, couriers and medical supplies.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5411/10-961. Secret. A copy was also sent to the Secretary of the Navy. The source text was an attachment to a covering memorandum of the same date from Nitze to Rusk.

[2] Document 146.

The bulk of the weapons, ammunition and material is brought in by infiltrators overland.

GW Anderson

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150. Memorandum From the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) [1]

JCSM-716-61 *Washington, October 9, 1961.*

SUBJECT

Concept of Use of SEATO Forces in South Vietnam (C)

1. Reference is made to the memorandum by the Deputy Secretary of Defense, dated 5 October 1961, [2] subject as above. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have considered the proposed concept for the use of SEATO forces in South Vietnam and the suggested two principal military possibilities for its implementation.

2. It is their opinion that the use of SEATO forces at the greatest possible number of entry points along the whole South Vietnam border, but excluding that part of the 17th parallel now held by the South Vietnamese Army itself, is not feasible for the following reasons:

a. SEATO forces will be deployed over a border of several hundred miles and will be attacked piecemeal or by-passed at the Viet Cong's own choice.

b. It may reduce but cannot stop infiltration of Viet Cong personnel and material.

c. It deploys SEATO forces in the weakest defense points should DRV or ChiCom forces intervene.

d. It compounds the problems of communications and logistical support.

3. Further, the alternative possibility of using SEATO forces to cover solely the 17th parallel, although considered feasible to a limited extent, is militarily unsound in view of the following considerations:

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 71 A 6489, Viet 091. Top Secret. Received in the Office of the Secretary of Defense on October 9. Also printed, with minor deletions, in *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pp. 297–299.

[2] Not found.

a. The 17th parallel is not a main avenue of approach being used by the Viet Cong.

b. North Vietnam may interpret such SEATO action as a preparation for aggression against them, thus promoting the possibility of communist harassment and destruction of friendly combat and logistic forces concentrated near the parallel, if not escalation.

4. As stated in your memorandum, the proposed concept set forth must be analyzed in the total context of the defense of Southeast Asia. Any concept which deals with the defense of Southeast Asia that does not include all or a substantial portion of Laos is, from a military standpoint, unsound. To concede the majority of northern and central Laos would leave three quarters of the border of Thailand exposed and thus invite an expansion of communist military action. To concede southern Laos would open the flanks of both Thailand and South Vietnam as well as expose Cambodia. Any attempt to combat insurgency in South Vietnam, while holding areas in Laos essential to the defense of Thailand and South Vietnam and, at the same time, putting troops in Thailand, would require an effort on the part of the United States alone on the order of magnitude of at least three divisions plus supporting units. This would require an additional two divisions from the United States.

5. What is needed is not the spreading out of our forces throughout Southeast Asia but rather a concentrated effort in Laos where a firm stand can be taken saving all or substantially all of Laos which would, at the same time, protect Thailand and protect the borders of South Vietnam.

6. The over-all objective could best be served by the implementation of SEATO Plan 5/61, or a variation thereof, now. This would accomplish the objective of assisting to secure the border of South Vietnam against the infiltration of personnel and material in support of the Viet Cong thus freeing Vietnamese forces to conduct more effective offensive operations in South Vietnam. In addition, this action would stem further communist gains in Laos and, at the same time, give concrete evidence of US determination to stand firm against further communist advances world-wide.

7. If implementation of SEATO Plan 5, or a variation thereof, is considered a politically unacceptable course of action at this time, there is provided herewith a possible limited interim course of action. This course of action, covered in the Appendices hereto,[3] could provide a degree of assistance to the Government of South Vietnam to regain control of its own territory, and could free certain

[3] Appendixes A and B are printed in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pp. 300–311.

South Vietnamese forces for offensive actions against the Viet Cong. While the Joint Chiefs of Staff agree that implementation of this limited course of action would not provide for the defense of Thailand or Laos, nor contribute substantially or permanently to solution of the over-all problem of defense of Southeast Asia, they consider the Plan preferable to either of the two military possibilities described in referenced memorandum.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:
L.L. Lemnitzer [4]
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

[4] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

151. Editorial Note

The Central Intelligence Agency prepared a Special National Intelligence Estimate, SNIE 10-3-61, "Probable Communist Reactions to Certain SEATO Undertakings in South Vietnam." The text of this paper is printed in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pages 313–321; although no copy has been found. The printed text does not include the usual cover sheet indicating that the estimate was approved by the appropriate intelligence agencies.

152. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, October 10, 1961—7 p.m.

467. Deptel 374. [2] Answers to questions raised reftel can be only extremely rough estimates at best in view paucity confirmed information available:

1, 2, and 3: While armed activity has always been controlled and cadred from the DRV, until summer 1961 perhaps between 70 and 95 percent of Viet Cong forces consisted of local indigenous personnel who had never been in DRV for training or indoctrination. Proportion local indigenous personnel always much higher in southern delta area and considerably lower in highlands bordering Laos, where population thinner and infiltration from DRV easier. Local indigenous personnel consist of (a) Commies and Commie sympathizers left in place by Viet Minh in 1954–55 when they were supposed to pull their armed forces out of South Vietnam for regroupment to North Vietnam under terms Geneva Accords; (b) Persons recruited by coercion through pressure and terrorist tactics since VC guerrilla campaign began to be stepped up two years ago; and (c) Those recruited by persuasion during same period. Line between latter two categories undoubtedly often hard to draw with respect to villagers and peasants who make up bulk of VC forces.

Infiltrators up to few months ago largely consisted of VC leaders and cadres. In southern areas infiltrators probably mostly regrouped southerners sent back from North Vietnam to South Vietnam since we have seen relatively few reports of VC with Northern Vietnamese accents. In central highlands area infiltrators included both Vietnamese and Montagnards, and these personnel placed into much lower levels of VC organization than political and military cadres which infiltrated into southern areas. Difficult to know to what extent these were persons trained in place in South Vietnam, persons regrouped to north in 1954 and sent back, or persons taken out of Vietnam more recently and trained probably in southern Laos prior to their return; several reports indicate last group greatly augmented since first of year.

In any case, little doubt that great bulk of infiltrators have come by land rather than by sea. Infiltration of personnel by sea probably restricted to couriers and individual agents.

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[1] Souce: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/10–1061. Secret; Priority. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd. The Department was also asked to pass a copy to ACSI.

[2] Dated October 3. (*Ibid.*, 751K.00/10–261)

During past three months or so picture given above has altered in certain important respects. Greatly stepped-up infiltration into central highlands and VC resistance zone delta northeast of Saigon has taken place. While in southern area infiltrators are still believed to be primarily individuals or small guerrilla groups rather than complete regular units in manner of execution and extent of coordinated attacks north of Kontum early Sept indicates these probably conducted by regular VC forces from nearby Laos and that large-scale infiltration of possibly up to battalion-size units now being carried out this area.

Conclusion about sizeable increase in infiltration is based more on deductions from number, size, and nature of VC attacks in central Vietnam and zone delta area in Sept than on actual specific evidence. We are making every effort as requested Dept's 344[3] to come up with concrete evidence, but such evidence has been hard to come by to date. One example is . . . statement of captured infiltrator that he was accompanied by about 250 VC who descended from North Vietnam via Laos into zone delta in July. Despite series of recent large-scale VC actions in central Vietnam, no prisoner interrogation reports of similar nature re infiltration into central Vietnam have come to our attention so far. Evidence is likewise scarce to confirm our continued belief that prisoners captured and interviewed during successful ARVN operations in delta in July–August claimed without exception to be local indigenous personnel.

Under these circumstances we believe it impossible come up with any very meaningful figure on number infiltrators. Feel best we can provide is above qualitative analysis. Even ARVN sources unable at present give reasonable estimate, though they are now reportedly working on this problem.

4. VC forces relied mainly until few months ago on captured weapons and material from GVN forces and crudely made arms fabricated in VC-controlled areas in South Vietnam. There were some reports, credible, of arms shipments from north by sea. Similarly VC depended largely upon area in which they found themselves for food supplies. We believe this is still true for southern Vietnam. In central highlands, however, there seems little doubt that weapons and ammunition are now coming in via Laos but it is impossible provide any estimate re quantity since arms continue to be of American or West European origin captured during Indo-China War rather than of Communist bloc manufacture. In view limited food availability in highlands area we assume VC also bringing in some food supplies from Laos to support greatly increased number of personnel.

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[3] Dated September 24. (*Ibid.*, 751K.00/9–2461)

Infiltration of arms as well as personnel by sea continues to be relatively small as far as available information indicates.

5. As one ARVN source said, trying to locate crossing points SVN/Laos border like trying to tell which hole in a sieve water comes out of. Actually, entire Laotian border open to infiltration and VC able use all existing roads and trails not under direct and continuing GVN or RLG control (latter are few indeed). Use of DMZ, reportedly heavy several months ago, probably discontinued, since route through Laos now wide open and not so liable political repercussions.

Nolting

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153. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, October 11, 1961—3 p.m.

471. Vietnamese have given guarded publicity to flood damage now occurring on lower reaches of Mekong. In response to inquiries of Economic Counsellor, Vice President Tho had following to say, with proviso that for variety of reasons GVN did not wish publicize extent of flood losses at this time. They appear catastrophic.

Vice President said that in provinces of Kien Tuong, Kien Phong and part of An Giang, 200,000 people are now homeless. All of Kien Tuong, comprising 43,000 cultivated hectares, has been "destroyed" by the incursion of two to three meters of water. In Kien Phong, 50 percent of cultivated area of 166,000 hectares has been lost, and in southern section of An Giang, 30 percent of cultivated area of 302,000 hectares has been destroyed. Road to Rach Gia from Long Xuyen is now acting as a dam and preventing flooding south of that line, but just north of road settlement of Caisan one has probably been completely destroyed. A quarrel is now going on between those living north and south of roadway, as those north of road wish it breached in order to relieve flooding in their areas. This would not be a wise move according to Vice President. While flood now appears to be receding Vietnamese authorities fear lunar tides occur-

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 851K.49/10-1161. Confidential; Priority. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd, Phnom Penh, and Bangkok. Received at 10:03 a.m.

ring about Oct. 26, as high tide from sea will then prevent recession of flood waters for a few days. Losses include 300,000 tons of rice; indeterminate quantity of animals, 50 people drowned; housing, possessions and clothing of 200,000 people. Relief goods, including clothing, medicine and the like will obviously be needed on most urgent basis, and we will attempt to prepare requirements as soon as possible, do what we can to help while means at hand, and keep Washington fully informed.

Nolting

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154. Memorandum From the President's Military Adviser (Taylor) to the President [1]

Washington, October 11, 1961.

SUBJECT

Discussion of Southeast Asia Planning, 10:45 a.m., Wednesday, 11 October 1961

1. It is my understanding that Mr. Alexis Johnson, representing State, will present to you the following principal topics.

a. *The present situation in Southeast Asia.* He will base this discussion upon the attached summary [2] which you may have read among your papers over the last weekend.

b. *The status of the military plan "SEATO 5 Plus"*, which is the old SEATO 5 [3] with a greater use of indigenous forces than in the original plan.

c. *A new concept for the introduction of SEATO forces into South Vietnam.*

2. With regard to SEATO Plan 5 Plus, I believe that it is drawn properly to cope with an overt resumption of hostilities but, as you have commented, it is not designed to cope with continued infiltration into Southern Laos and across into South Vietnam. The principal unfinished business with regard to this Plan is to nail down the contributions to be made by the other SEATO countries, and to

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-e25-71. Top Secret. No drafting information is given on the source text.

[2] Not found attached to the source text, but presumably a reference to the Department of State paper, *infra*.

[3] Regarding SEATO Plan 5 Plus, see footnote 1, *infra*. Regarding SEATO Plan 5, see footnote 3, Document 104.

reach agreement as to the circumstances which would warrant implementing it.

3. The concept for strengthening South Vietnam will be presented to you to obtain general approval for its further development. Decision may be asked on some specific actions which are desirable in South Vietnam, regardless of whether the new concept is adopted in its entirety.

4. One important question which should be discussed is the possible U.S. force requirements (air and ground) if the SEATO Plan 5 Plus and the South Vietnam Plan should be implemented either singly or concurrently. While a decision to plan is not a decision to implement, in all logic we should have the forces available or in sight for these Southeast Asia plans and, at the same time, be able to meet our obligations to Berlin and NATO. In my opinion, our present military structure is not sufficient for both tasks. Thus, the capital question is whether additional forces should be mobilized now or the limitations of our military capabilities in Southeast Asia accepted as a permanent fact.

Maxwell D. Taylor [4]

[4] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

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155. Paper Prepared in the Department of State [1]

Washington, October 11, 1961.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

I. Present Situation

[Here follow Sections A and B on the political and military situation in Laos.]

[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Regional Security Series, Southeast Asia General. Top Secret. The source text and three attached papers were sent to McGeorge Bundy under cover of a memorandum of October 11, signed by W.G. Brubeck of the Department of State's Executive Secretariat on behalf of Executive Secretary Lucius D. Battle, explaining that the papers were to be discussed at the meeting on Southeast Asia at 10:45 a.m. that day. The paper entitled "Concept for Intervention in Laos" (SEATO Plan 5 Plus) (Tab A) is not printed. Tab C, Plan for Intervention in Vietnam, is printed in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pp. 300–311.

C. South Viet-Nam—Political

1. According to Saigon country team, Diem Government has not significantly improved its political position among people or substantially furthered national unity.

2. Also, according to country team, Diem has still not delegated sufficient authority to field command and country team does not feel that "September saw progress toward attainment task force goals of creating viable and increasingly democratic society."[2]

D. South Viet-Nam—Military

1. Although GVN military capabilities have increased, Viet Cong capabilities are increasing at more rapid rate and Viet Cong attacks have increased in size.

2. Viet Cong "regular" forces have increased from about 7,000 at beginning of year to approximately 17,000.

3. Viet Cong have moved from stage of small bands to large units. During September Viet Cong mounted three attacks with over 1,000 men in each. Viet Cong strategy may be directed at "liberating" an area in which a "government" could be installed.

4. Although vast majority of Viet Cong troops are of local origin, the infiltration of Viet Cong cadres from North Viet-Nam via Laos, the demilitarized zone, and by sea appears to be increasing. However, there is little evidence of major supplies from outside sources, most arms apparently being captured or stolen from GVN forces or from the French during the Indo-China war.

[Here follow Sections E, F, and G on the political situation in Thailand and Cambodia and the military situation in Cambodia.]

II. Additional Courses of Action

[Here follow Sections A and B on the political and military situation in Laos.]

C. South Viet-Nam—Political

1. Upon determination that material warrants, urgently publish "white paper" now in course of preparation on DRV aggression against South Viet-Nam.

2. Undertake, in consultation with Government of South Viet-Nam, action in the UN to obtain UN observers in South Viet-Nam with a mandate to "report the facts" and help deter further infiltra-

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[2] The quotation is from telegram 414 from Saigon, September 28. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/9-2861) An extract from this telegram is printed in *Pentagon Papers, Gravel Edition*, vol. II, p. 71.

tions. (Details various types of UN action that could be set forth in the attached "Concept for Intervention in Viet-Nam" (Tab B).)

D. South Viet-Nam—Military

1. After determining its feasibility by investigation on the spot, and suitable preparations with our allies and the UN, undertake the introduction of SEATO forces into South Viet-Nam in accordance with the attached plan (Tab C). This plan can be undertaken whether or not "SEATO Plan 5 Plus" is undertaken in Laos and whether or not a political settlement is reached in Laos. However, it would be politically somewhat more difficult to undertake in the latter event. Also, as noted above, "SEATO Plan 5 Plus" should not be undertaken in Laos without also undertaking this plan in South Viet-Nam.

2. Whether or not foregoing plan for military intervention in South Viet-Nam is implemented, immediately undertake the following actions:

a. Subject to agreement with GVN now being sought, dispatch "Jungle Jim" air unit to South Viet-Nam initially on training mission.

b. Assist the GVN in strengthening its action against DRV infiltration by sea.

c. Encourage, including U.S. advisers, guerrilla action against Communist aerial resupply missions in Tchepone area, including introduction of special indigenous units in specific interdiction missions with ground anti-aircraft weapons.

[Here follow Sections E and F on the political and military situation in Thailand.]

III. Decisions Required at This Time

A. Whether to continue exploration with our allies and in SEATO, as well as detailed military planning on "SEATO Plan 5 Plus".

B. Whether immediately to send to South Viet-Nam a very high-level military figure to explore with country team, Diem, and CINCPAC, as well as on the ground, feasibility and desirability from both a political and military standpoint, of the proposed plan for SEATO intervention into South Viet-Nam. Such a person could also make recommendations for additional immediate action short of intervention which might be taken in the present situation.

C. If GVN agreement is received, whether immediately to dispatch "Jungle Jim" Air Force unit to South Viet-Nam.

D. Whether to approve guerrilla ground action, including use of U.S. advisers, against Communist aerial resupply missions in Tchepone area.

E. Whether to approve exploration with key members Foreign Relations Committee change in SEATO voting formula.

F. Whether to authorize Ambassador Harriman, in his discretion and at time of his choosing, to explore with Pushkin principle of movement of Meos from Xieng Khouang area to south Laos–South Viet-Namese border area as quid pro quo for movement of Pathet Lao from southern Laos during regroupment period.

[Tab B]

Paper Prepared by the Vietnam Task Force [1]

CONCEPT FOR INTERVENTION IN VIET-NAM

General

This paper presents a concept for the introduction of SEATO forces into South Viet-Nam, under a UN umbrella if possible, in an effort to arrest and hopefully to reverse the deteriorating situation in that country. It is closely related to and compatible with the plan for military intervention into Laos if the necessity for intervention into that country should arise.

If there is continued delay in reaching a satisfactory political settlement in Laos and the present ambiguous situation there continues, consideration should be given to prompt implementation of this plan with respect to South Viet-Nam in order to assist in protecting that country from the large scale Viet Minh infiltration now going on through Laos and otherwise to assist South Viet-Nam. (Enemy knowledge that a plan such as this is being considered and the preliminary moves that would be made in the UN also might have a favorable effect on expediting a settlement in Laos.)

If there is a breakdown in the negotiations in Laos and renewal of Communist offensive action there, this could be met in Laos only by SEATO Plan 5 Plus. However, it would take some considerable time before that plan alone could offer material protection to the borders of South Viet-Nam. Therefore, in this eventuality, the implementation of both SEATO Plan 5 Plus and this plan with respect to South Viet-Nam should be undertaken.

While a satisfactory political settlement in Laos would considerably reduce Viet Minh infiltration through Laos into South Viet-Nam, it would not entirely eliminate it. While such a reduction

[1] Top Secret.

would materially assist the GVN in meeting the Viet Cong threat, there is no assurance that, even under these circumstances, the GVN will in the foreseeable future be able to defeat the Viet Cong. Under these circumstances, although the need of South Viet-Nam for outside assistance such as proposed in this plan would probably still be very strong, it would be much more difficult to find a satisfactory political base upon which to implement this plan.

The visibility of this plan would be dependent upon the degree to which it could and would also result in the GVN accelerating political and military action in its own defense. A judgment on this can only be reached after thorough exploration on the spot with the country team and the GVN.

The paper also discusses a number of lesser actions that might be ordered at once and that would be of some help in arresting the deteriorating situation in Viet-Nam.

The Concept

Political Objective

To prevent South Viet-Nam from being destroyed by Communist guerrilla activity inspired, directed and supported from North Viet-Nam.

. . . . . .

United Nations Action

Assuming that the situation in South Viet-Nam has deteriorated seriously, due to continuing Vietminh infiltrations and harassments, there are two possibilities with respect to UN action: (1) Recourse to the Security Council and the regular General Assembly prior to any SEATO intervention with a view to seeking UN observers, and failing this to at least help rationalize politically a subsequent SEATO move into South Viet-Nam; and/or (2) a simultaneous move in the UN and SEATO designed primarily to justify SEATO intervention.

1. *Recourse to UN prior to SEATO Intervention in South Viet-Nam*

Diem could request the UN to send observers with the mandate to "report the facts" and help deter by their presence further infiltrations, those from Laos and those moving south across the 17th parallel. In such circumstances, the U.S. could have the Security Council convened in the first instance. A Soviet veto in the Council is likely since, as in Laos, the USSR and Communist China can be expected to oppose supplanting the ICC mechanism with UN observation. Assuming a veto, the next move might be to place the item

on the agenda of the Sixteenth General Assembly which will be in session at least until December 20.

Whether the required two-thirds majority could be mustered in the Assembly will depend on a number of considerations including: whether direct military intervention is imminent; how good a public case we can make documenting Communist intervention from the outside; whether the prospect of Communist takeover is immediate; and what the attitude is of key states in the area, and in particular India, Ceylon, Burma and Cambodia.

The thrust in the General Assembly will probably be a disinclination to have the UN intervene (the three main principals are non-UN members—Communist China, South and North Viet-Nam) in favor of an exhortation to the ICC to look into the problem and perhaps the calling of a conference, as was the case in Laos.

2. *Recourse to UN at Same Time as SEATO Moves Into South Viet-Nam*

If SEATO action in Viet-Nam is decided upon, we must make the assumption in our contingency planning that inevitably the Viet-Nam case will be brought to the UN by a third party. We would be in a better position politically if, on the Lebanese pattern, we took the initiative by coupling a move by SEATO with a move to the SC. Our objective would be to get the UN to send a small group of observers. We would adopt the public posture in the SC that SEATO need stay in South Viet-Nam only and until such time as the UN could deter effectively further infiltrations and help maintain the independence of South Viet-Nam. As in the previous contingency, recourse to the General Assembly would probably prove necessary.

156. Memorandum for the Record by the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Gilpatric) [1]

I-19146/61 *Washington, October 11, 1961.*

SUBJECT

South Vietnam

At this morning's meeting with the President [2] the following course of action was agreed upon with relation to South Vietnam:

1. The Defense Department is authorized to send the Air Force's Jungle Jim Squadron into Vietnam to serve under the MAAG as a training mission and not for combat at the present time.

2. General Maxwell Taylor accompanied by Dr. Rostow from the White House, General Lansdale, a representative of JCS, Mr. Cottrell from State and probably someone from ISA will leave for Vietnam over the weekend on a Presidential mission (to be announced by the President at this afternoon's press conference [3] as an

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD/ISA Files: FRC 64 A 2382, Vietnam 092 Jan.–Oct. 1961. Top Secret. Drafted by Gilpatric. A note on the source text indicates that a copy was sent to Lansdale. Also printed in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pp. 322–323.

[2] Attending this meeting, which lasted from 11 a.m. to 12:25 p.m., were the President, Rusk, McNamara, Lemnitzer, Dulles, U. Alexis Johnson, Cottrell, Wilson, Bissell, Ball, Gilpatric, and McGeorge Bundy. (Kennedy Library, JFK Log, Book II) Only one other record of this meeting has been found. In telegram 1503–61 to McGarr, October 11, Lemnitzer reported that at a White House meeting that morning the President had decided to send to Vietnam a mission headed by General Taylor and including Rostow, Cottrell, Craig, Lansdale, a CINCPAC representative, and probably other representatives from ISA, CIA, and the Department of State. The mission planned to leave Washington on October 15 and to proceed to Saigon via Honolulu, spending about 2 weeks in Vietnam with subsequent visits to Bangkok and Vientiane if the situation permitted. According to Lemnitzer, the mission's task was "to review situation and explore with country team, President Diem and CINCPAC, as well as on the ground, feasibility and desirability from a political and military standpoint of U.S. intervention in Vietnam. Mission will make recommendations for additional action short of intervention which might be taken in the present situation." (National Defense University, Lemnitzer Papers, 1961 Eyes Only Messages)

[3] For the transcript of the President's press conference held in the Department of State auditorium at 4:30 p.m., see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1961*, pp. 656–664. The announcement of the Taylor–Rostow mission was made public in Saigon before Ambassador Nolting was notified, which he noted in telegram 478, October 12. In telegram 430 to Saigon, October 13, the Department expressed regret that the circumstances of the decision precluded advance notice to Nolting, but pointed out that the Chargé at the Vietnamese Embassy in Washington had been informed prior to the President's announcement. Both telegrams are in Department of State, Central File 120.1551K/10–1261. In a note of October 12 to President Diem, Nolting offered his "personal apologies concerning the manner in which the announcement of the proposed visit of General Maxwell Taylor to Viet-Nam was handled." Nolting explained that Washington authorities had undoubtedly "failed to take into account the time differential" in not giving him prior notification.

economic survey) to look into the feasibility from both political and military standpoints of the following:

(a) the plan for military intervention discussed at this morning's meeting on the basis of the Vietnam task force paper entitled "Concept for Intervention in Vietnam"; [4]

(b) an alternative plan for stationing in Vietnam fewer U.S. armed forces than those called for under the plan referred to in (a) above and with a more limited objective than dealing with the Viet Cong; in other words, such a small force would probably go in at Tourane and possibly another southern port principally for the purpose of establishing a U.S. "presence" in Vietnam;

(c) other alternatives in lieu of putting any U.S. combat forces in Vietnam, i.e., stepping up U.S. assistance and training of Vietnam units, furnishing of more U.S. equipment, particularly helicopters and other light aircraft, trucks and other ground transport, etc.

3. During the two or three weeks that will be required for the completion of General Taylor's mission, State will push ahead with the following political actions:

(a) protest to the ICC on the step-up in North Vietnamese support of Viet Cong activities,

(b) tabling at the UN a white paper based on Mr. William Jorden's report concerning Communist violations of the Geneva Accords, and

(c) consultations with our SEATO allies, principally the British and the Australians, regarding SEATO actions in support of the deteriorating situation in Vietnam.

Roswell Gilpatric [5]

(Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878, 350 Vietnam—Taylor)

[4] See Tab B, *supra*.

[5] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

157. Draft Instructions From the President to His Military Representative (Taylor) [1]

Washington, October 11, 1961.

I should like you to proceed shortly to Saigon for the purpose of appraising the situation in South Vietnam, particularly as it concerns the threat to the internal security and stability of that country. After conferring with the appropriate United States and South Vietnam authorities, I would like your views on the courses of action which our government should take at this juncture to avoid a further deterioration in South Vietnam.

As a part of your appraisal, I should like you to evaluate what could be accomplished by the introduction of SEATO or United States forces into South Vietnam, determining the role, composition and probable disposition of such forces. Concurrently, you should examine the possibilities of improving the effectiveness of South Vietnamese forces by additional equipment and training as well as by a further increase in the size of the armed forces of South Vietnam.

I would like to be assured that all of our United States aid, military and economic, is being applied to this main problem of the internal threat to South Vietnam. This aid, once approved, should flow into Vietnam with minimum procedural delays. Having noted the long and complicated chain of economic and military responsibility between Washington and Saigon, I have wondered whether greater simplicity and directness might not be possible. Please look into these questions and let me have your comments.

I suspect that there are many unconventional forms of assistance which we might bring to this situation if we apply all our initiative and ingenuity. Will you see that we are not overlooking any possibilities which fall outside of strictly orthodox measures?

This trip offers you the opportunity to observe at first hand the operations of the CIA in the areas which you visit. I am asking Mr. Dulles to have his field representatives put themselves at your disposition for such briefings and discussions as may be necessary.

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-142-69. A handwritten notation on the source text reads, "Draft prepared by Gen. Taylor. Final version dated 13 Oct." In a memorandum of October 12 to U. Alexis Johnson, William Bundy wrote that Gilpatric and Lemnitzer were prepared to concur in the draft instructions subject to certain changes and additions which he listed. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/10-1261) Johnson transmitted a revised draft to McGeorge Bundy under cover of a memorandum of October 12, in which he said that it had been cleared with William Bundy, Gilpatric, and Lemnitzer. (*Ibid.*) The instructions as given by the President to Taylor on October 13, which were substantially different from either of the earlier drafts, are printed in Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares*, pp. 225–226.

In Saigon, you will look to Ambassador Nolting to arrange your contacts with the South Vietnam government and to provide you guidance on the local situation. You will necessarily have to discuss with President Diem and his officials some of the courses of action which we have under consideration in order to elicit their views and to assure their cooperation if we take certain decisions. In these contacts, it is important to emphasize that your talks are exploratory and in no wise commit the United States Government to subsequent action.

Although you may need to visit other places in the area before returning, the Vietnam situation is urgent and requires priority of attention. I would like you to cable me your impressions and recommendations as soon as they are firm.

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158. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, October 11, 1961—7:12 p.m.

416. Embtel 471. [2] Suggest flood offers major opportunity GVN demonstrate concern population, ability do something for them, particularly since flood area coincides with area strong Red influence and is situation which offers opportunity show people GVN solicitude their welfare in concrete terms they can understand. If GVN gives flood only "guarded publicity", flood area will doubtless absorb its losses and recover in time, but chance for major psychological victory will have been lost. Recommend Embassy urge Diem declare disaster area, request assistance friendly nations, perhaps make radio appeal to nation, mobilize resources government bureaucracy and military on crash basis. Could this be opportunity for Civic Action type program by ARVN? Thompson may have suggestions re control rice and supplies which may be distributed.

Department, ICA, DOD studying possibilities US disaster aid. Request Embassy assessment needs soonest. Assume any US aid would be provided in manner calculated maximize GVN credit with

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 851K.49/10-1161. Confidential; Niact. Drafted by Heavner, cleared with Wood, ICA, DOD, and the Bureau of the Budget, initialed for the Acting Secretary by Cottrell, and repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd, Phnom Penh, and Bangkok for Anspacher.

[2] Document 153.

VN populace. Understand some disaster equipment such as water purification may be available Phnom Penh.

Embassy may wish consult CA–11026 of June 16, 1958,[3] which outlines possible actions such disasters. Note Ambassador may offer up to $10,000 assistance at his discretion.

Ball

[3] Not printed. (Department of State, Central Files, 800.49/6–1658)

159. Letter From the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (McGarr) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Lemnitzer)[1]

Saigon, October 12, 1961.

DEAR GENERAL LEMNITZER: I trust that by now you have received my report to CINCPAC on my first twelve months as Chief MAAG Vietnam together with the important classified communications intelligence inclosure.[2] Although this report gives a fair encapsulization of progress, problems yet to be solved, and further objectives together with a projection of our mission into the future, I feel that I should attempt to wrap up in one letter for your personal information, my frank appraisal of the developing situation. My feeling of concern generated by many State and Task Force Vietnam messages from Washington of which State–Defense 337[3] is a fair example appears to be growing in validity. For your information, all of the members of the Country Team, which is the Task Force group here in Vietnam, received the distinct impression that while this State–Defense message provides welcome and encouraging support, it was written primarily for high level civilian consumption to cover State Department with paper in the eventuality that the situation here goes from bad to worse. Also, State 269 to Saigon (TS)[4] which went to all Ambassadors in this area dealt largely with military

[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 334, MAAG/Vietnam Files FRC 64 A 2424, 250/16 Operations Planning. Secret.

[2] A copy of this report, dated September 1, is attached to a memorandum of October 25 from McGarr to Nolting. (*Ibid.*, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878, Internal Security 1961)

[3] Document 136.

[4] Not found.

matters was followed by obvious pressure here to get a military statement that RVNAF could commit significant strength in Laos under coalition control. State–Defense 337 was discussed at the Ambassador's conference during Admiral Felt's recent visit.[3] It was mentioned at that time that this message in effect, points up dangers in the situation here of which we were already well aware and which we have previously reported from this end. It then goes on to suggest a number of areas in which we may wish to take further action with the statement and implication that these things should be accomplished within the next thirty days if Vietnam were to be saved. Again, these suggested items are mostly items which we have reported from this end and upon which we are working and have made varying degrees of progress. Indications are that State has only recently been "reading their mail" and acquainting themselves with many of the details on the situation here.

For this reason, I feel that for the protection of the Armed Forces of the United States and specifically the Army which runs MAAG Vietnam, you should have my analysis and appraisal of the basic causes behind the presently worsening situation here. Although we are operating on the principle that we must get on with the job and not worry about past mistakes, I am firmly convinced that a history of these past errors is quite necessary to an objective understanding of the developing situation today. This is highlighted by the evident desire of State Department to gloss over or forget previous basic differences of opinion between them and the military, especially in this area, which have contributed so greatly to the present situation and which of necessity will continue to exert a significant and even controlling impact on what happens here in the foreseeable future. The extent of this control will be dependent on the communist timetable.

As you will recall, upon my arrival more than thirteen months ago, I immediately initiated action to increase the military strength of the Armed Forces of Vietnam. This was because the situation here was much more critical than had been indicated to me in my briefings enroute, and because it was apparent that we did not have the required sense of urgency either in Washington or here. Also, because of this deterioration and because it was apparent to me from a political-military viewpoint that the situation had changed radically since the formation of the Armed Forces of Vietnam in 1954, I made an all out effort to take the basic steps I considered necessary for improvement. President Diem had foreseen this change ahead of either the Embassy or MAAG here and had since 1955 continuously requested of our various Ambassadors and MAAG Chiefs additional

[3] See Document 142.

MAP supported forces both regular and paramilitary. I have heard him a number of times ask former Ambassador Durbrow for a raise of 20,000 men in force ceiling. He also, acting on his own, organized the Civil Guard and continued to increase it to its present strength of 68,000, although initially our government's representatives here and at home refused to support it with MAP or Defense support money. He stated over and over again to Ambassador Durbrow that the situation was worsening, and he did not have the force with which to stop it. As you recall, I fought a losing battle for my first ten months against the entire Country Team, which was then being ably supported by State Department, in an attempt to secure the increased force level which I considered an absolute minimum for the provision of a rotational training base so that the ARVN could be at least partially trained to successfully meet the Viet Cong threat. Contrary to general opinion in Washington then and apparently even now to some extent, this 20,000 was not primarily for the purpose of adding additional combat units for commission to the hot war going on at that time and still going on with increasing tempo. It was mainly for the establishment of a rotational base for training mentioned previously, to strengthen a rudimentary logistical system, and to give additional much needed strength to the engineer support as well as a practically non-existent military intelligence capability here at that time. Although I presented valid military justifications to Ambassador Durbrow and the Country Team here over a period of eight months after my arrival, and although the Ambassador finally admitted that my arguments were sound, he merely stated that in his opinion, additional force was not necessary and he would not approve it.

As you know, State dragged its feet for some months on the initial Defense–ISA efforts to develop a Counter-Insurgency Plan for Vietnam. Prior to State participation, Defense had already issued instructions and MAAG had developed the military portion of the Counter-Insurgency Plan for Vietnam as well as a rudimentary political-economic-psychological section as it impacted on the military. When, finally, the State Department directed Ambassador Durbrow in October 1960 to write such a plan,[6] our completed plan was avidly seized upon as the initial Country Team effort. However, after the initial flowery approval, the Country Team then spent the next six weeks requiring MAAG to rejustify all the military facets of the military section of this Counter-Insurgency Plan before they would let it go forward. Then, some weeks and months later, they finally came up with their comprehensive political-psychological-economic sections.

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[6] See *Foreign Relations*, 1958–1960, vol. I, p. 604.

The main stumbling block on the approval by the Country Team of MAAG's counter-insurgency section was our unequivocal demand for at least an additional 20,000 addition to the force basis. By State Department directive to the Ambassador here,[7] the approval of the Counter-Insurgency Plan was then made a quid pro quo for sweeping political reforms. The end result was that Ambassador Durbrow could not get what he considered adequate approval by the Vietnamese Government to this overall Counter-Insurgency Plan which, of course, held up the implementation of the 20,000 force increase. MAAG did go ahead without Counter-Insurgency Plan approval on its reorganization of RVNAF and its drive for a single chain of command as well as other military items which were approved and implemented or gotten underway during the period of the Durbrow–Diem Counter-Insurgency Plan negotiations in which Durbrow attempted to gain political concessions. When Ambassador Durbrow finally informed President Diem of the approval on the 20,000, President Diem's reaction was cool, stating the approval only allowed him to spend his own money, which he did not have. A few days after the Ambassador left and before the arrival of the new Ambassador, President Diem gave his approval which started the final action on the induction of the 20,000. President Kennedy's pronouncements on Vietnam as well as Vice President Johnson's visit here, not to mention increasing Viet Cong pressure, made it imperative that this force increase be implemented as soon as possible. However, here again we lost approximately two months more trying to resolve the budgetary problems incident to how much the Vietnamese Government would pay toward the overall military budget. The Vietnamese Government had stated that they could not finance this additional increment of 20,000 and they did not start induction in earnest until after the Thuan visit to Washington and after the budget committee here in Vietnam composed of MAAG, GVN and the Country Team had approved the money as a supplement to the 1961 budget. This again lost more valuable time and has further set back the time when these units will become effectively operational. It appears that this "lead time" for induction and training which I emphasized over and over again during my fight for the additional 20,000 has now been more or less conveniently relegated to the background by State, with the approval of the 20,000 and an additional 30,000 at President Kennedy–President Diem level. However, this is one of the primary causes which is at the base of most of our current and future military problems here today. I feel this

[7] Transmitted in telegram 1054 to Saigon, February 3. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5–MSP/1–461) For text of the basic counterinsurgency plan, see Document 1.

salient point must be kept in mind and restated periodically in discussions and correspondence affecting the situation as it is developing now. Of course, the facts of life of the impact of Laos was also used during the unsuccessful months of my attempt to obtain the additional 20,000 increase. As we now know, our military estimate on the seriousness of the Laotian situation as it impacts on Vietnam was not overstated at that time. Personally, I feel that if the communist steps up his timetable, which is well within his capability, in an effort to take advantage of our weakness here before these additional forces can be organized, trained and brought to bear, we may well lose South Vietnam. If so, the year's delay in agreeing to increase the Vietnamese Armed Forces would be largely responsible.

The heart of the Counter-Insurgency Plan written by MAAG was the phased, coordinated, cohesive action in the political-military-psychological-economic fields under the overall direction and control of a National Plan to counter the Insurgency. This plan must exploit all elements of National Power, fully consider the border problem and subdivide the country into geographic areas which differ for varying types and degrees of guerrilla activity. This subdivision is based on the availability of food, terrain and characteristics of the population. The concept of operations cannot consist of a series of isolated, uncoordinated skirmishes and pacification measures cannot be applied uniformly in all parts of the country simultaneously because of the prohibitive number of troops this would require. Rather, the concept visualized on a preplanned basis, the progressive pacification of selected areas. Further, it must be recognized that to drive the guerrilla force from a particular area is only the *beginning*. The guerrilla "sub surface" or political structure must then be eliminated, and replaced with a viable governmental structure which will rally the population to National objectives. This plan has not yet been written much less implemented. I feel this is currently one of the most important problems which must be solved and that this problem is now basically political as our significant military progress cannot be fully effective until this political progress is made. This is because of the absolute requirement for gaining and maintaining trust and confidence in the established government, particularly at village and hamlet level. Best estimates at present indicate that 25% of the population actively assist the Viet Cong, while another 25% are sitting on the fence. Military, politico-economic and psychological plans—however fully coordinated at National and Regional level—are meaningless unless an integrated military-civic program is developed, recognized, understood and implemented in the villages and hamlets. It will require exceptionally firm and urgent pressure by our Ambassador and the State Department if we are to have such a plan in time. I have spoken about this

necessity to President Diem and Secretary Thuan over and over again as it impacts on the military and have written a number of letters to them without success, copies of which have regularly been sent to you, pointing up the need for such a National Plan so that a Military Operations Plan could be made really meaningful. The government has organized a National Internal Security Council but it is not working to the degree that it is making a meaningful contribution to the overall vital control and coordination of the Counter-Insurgency Plan. The military member tells me, very confidentially as it could mean his neck, that he has little say in the operations of this group on military matters—that he merely goes to be *told* what to do. This apparently is true in varied degrees for the other agencies of the government also. The end result of this failure to develop a National Plan is disjointed and unconnected governmental actions in the overall counter-insurgency field. These uncoordinated, uncontrolled actions make it very difficult for the military to function effectively in the military phase of this counter-insurgency effort. Consequently, they are mostly reacting to Viet Cong threats rather than acting in an overall coordinated military effort.

As you know, MAAG has been pressuring and assisting the Joint General Staff and Field Command to develop a Military Operations Plan for inclusion in the National Plan when that plan is written. The Counter-Insurgency Plan and Tactics and Techniques of Counter-Insurgent Operations treatise written by MAAG[9] have been used by the Commanding General of Field Command as a basis for the directives for this Operations Plan. His directives were sound and have gone to the three Corps Commanders for their guidance in writing their portion of the plan on a cohesive, coordinated, countrywide basis. He has received and returned their plans for additional refinement together with his additional guidance. It will probably take some two or three months before the final Military Operations Plan will be completed. Although this is not preventing a more coordinated purely military approach to the overall problem in so far as possible—it is slowing it down. In addition, I am convinced that *until* a meaningful valid National Plan is produced into which the Military Operations Plan can be integrated, the overall military operation in Vietnam cannot be adequately carried out with any certainty of success. At present, our problems are in the area of a firm *control* and *coordinating framework* under the National Internal Security Council extending down through subordinate councils or

[9] A copy of this treatise, first published on November 10 and 13, 1960, and then reissued in four revised versions, the last of which was dated February 10, 1962, is in Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878, Internal Security 1961.

committees at the district, village and hamlet levels. This lack of an adequate framework, together with the chaotic, uncoordinated state of the intelligence effort in this country, will continue to handicap the operations of the military. Although a central intelligence organization has been set up, Colonel Y who is in charge is little more than an office boy, working on mostly inconsequential problems, rather than a director and a coordinator. He is being undercut by other civil intelligence agencies who do not wish to lose their power. It is problematic if President Diem intends to really build up a strong central intelligence office as he appears sensitive to the concentration of power in any one agency. On the military side, MAAG has brought in mobile intelligence training teams and has revamped the intelligence school system here to make it more responsive militarily to field work against the Viet Cong. However, with the lack of cooperation and coordination by the Province Chiefs, who collect intelligence at hamlet and village level and do not adequately inform the ARVN, this improvement in military intelligence cannot be meaningful. Here again is an area in which our Ambassador and the State Department must take necessary strong, positive and early action to insure that we do have an integrated and coordinated national intelligence effort here controlled at national level and reaching down to, and up from, the grass roots "hamlet" level.

I was concerned when State Department directed the Task Force group here to develop a phased Pacification Plan on a *dateline* basis.* We most certainly agree and have been working for a phased, coordinated, cohesive, geographical plan for clearing the entire country of the communist guerrilla under an overall National Plan. However, it is impossible to get such a pacification plan developed unless we can get an overall National Plan developed first. Even then, it will be impossible to give State Department the phased plan with dates for completion of successive portions of that plan for which they continue to press. I understand second hand that Doctor Rostow and Ben Woods [*Wood*] are still pushing for this timetable of conquest in the clearance effort here in Vietnam. As previously stated, our recommendations to the government and to the RVNAF have pointed up the need for such a plan, without, however, the unrealistic timetable control. We feel this timetable approach to be highly questionable because of the advanced state of the insurgency and because of the lack of adequate forces to counter it. Although the plan must be geographically phased on the amoeba principle starting with the clearance of various key areas and expanding these

* Not further identified.

areas until the entire country is covered, we do not feel it should or could be prepared on a mechanical timetable basis.

The victories which were won by the 7th and 5th Divisions of the III Corps in the Plaine des Jones and Delta area in July, August and part of September were heartening to us all. However, these victories must be placed in proper context as they apparently have whetted the appetite of our people back home for additional continuing and successive victories. It is being intimated that we should follow through to complete victory now that we have the Viet Cong on the run. This is in spite of the fact that since 1 September, particularly in the Dak Ha-Pleikodil areas north of Kontum, we started meeting not territorial Viet Cong but regular Viet Cong units in larger numbers of from 500 to 1,500, and these larger Viet Cong units have been gaining successes of their own. I was asked by the Country Team "how could this happen after our victories!" I explained the military facts of life to them but am sure it has not gotten through to their top sides. Basically, the fact is that the operations in the Delta area which were successful were preplanned set-piece operations. Plenty of time was given to their planning and moving into position and tactical surprise together with superiority of force was gained. Even though the planning, movement to contact and actual operations were surprisingly well done, errors were committed which could have caused failure. In these operations, the Viet Cong in some instances were either cooperative enough or forced by encirclement to stand and fight in larger groups against stiff opposition—which is not their tactic. The reorganization of the Armed Forces with the single chain of command and the progress we have made in our training over the past ten months in developing joint operations gave these divisions the capability to fight the set-piece battle—not the approved strength increase which is not yet inducted and trained. However, the battles up north against larger, better equipped, better trained, more conventional type Viet Cong units coming in from across the Laotian border have been significantly different. There, we have been hit by superior numbers who have taken the initiative, gained surprise and won. Due to the state of ARVN training, follow-up action has not been quick or well coordinated enough to gain decisive results although action of this type has, at times, inflicted comparable casualties on the Viet Cong. We have not yet had the opportunity to train the Armed Forces of Vietnam to the degree that they can *react* to a sizable surprise attack effectively and efficiently. The training which has been given here over the past year has of necessity been a "boot strap" operation by various ARVN units with approximately 75% to 80% of the entire ARVN regular [illegible] committed against the communist guerrilla. This leaves little [illegible] time for badly needed training on a preplanned

basis. This is the result again of not having adequate strength to both train and fight and it will be some time in the future, months and probably over a year, until this can be done to the required degree. And, it can only be done then if the communists do not continue the significant increase of infiltration of guerrillas into South Vietnam across porous borders which has been going on to my knowledge for the past year. In this respect, I feel it is *necessary* to keep in mind and to *convince* our civil opposite numbers in Washington by constant reiteration that the military situation thirteen months ago was critical and that we were only containing the emergency at that time. The build up of additional strength in the 20,000 and the 30,000 increments were for the purpose of providing a rotational training base and liquidating the insurgency, and were predicated on the stated assumption that the communists would not significantly increase their guerrilla strength in South Vietnam. Since the first of the year, this strength has risen from approximately 10,000 to 17,000 with 4,000 of that increase in the past four months. So, *again* the situation has changed significantly, a fact apparently not fully realized or adequately taken into consideration by Washington civilians. I feel it quite illogical to expect that this long delayed, insufficient and not yet organized or trained additional increment of strength can be expected to account for impressive victories "which should be extended and capitalized upon." Time, which was thrown away four years ago and even as late as thirteen months ago cannot be recaptured. It cannot be provided under MAP and delivered with the beans and bullets to the soldiers on the battlefield. MAAG is making every possible effort to speed up the training, keep pressure on for more rapid induction and to develop additional badly needed leadership—not to mention the urgent development of an all important National Plan. MAAG recommendations for large scale RVNAF effort against sizable Viet Cong build up in Zone D and along the I–II Corps boundaries have received approval and planning started last week. Properly supported, these look hopeful if done soon enough.

Another area which concerns me and which will no doubt have its impact to a greater and greater degree as the Viet Cong pressure mounts against the Armed Forces here is the force structure and capability of the regular ARVN troops. As you recall, State Department was insistent at the time of my arrival that the ARVN was too conventionally organized and operated. This was never so to the degree that they claimed and most certainly for the past year it has not been valid. Not only Rangers but all ARVN troops have received Ranger oriented training to the full extent allowed by hot war operations here. In figuring the force basis for the 20,000, State insisted on a great number of Ranger companies. We resisted this,

fought a losing battle and finally settled for 21 Ranger companies. This was in addition to the 64 Ranger companies already in being which, if properly used, were considered militarily adequate by MAAG at that time. In order to activate these additional 21 Ranger companies, President Diem and the Joint General Staff, contrary to my recommendations, have been cadring all of the required leadership and enlisted strength from ARVN units. They claim that this is the only way they can develop these Ranger companies *quickly* enough in view of the "worsening" situation. This approach is proving counterproductive. After continued strong representation, I have finally succeeded in getting this system changed so that only 50% of the leadership and men are taken from the ARVN units. However, I feel serious damage has been done to the capability of the divisional units which have been cadred for this purpose. For instance, the 5th Division is now only at 58% strength. In addition to this, Mr. Thuan is now insisting that we form four more airborne battalions from the additional 20,000 troop ceiling for use in the strategic reserve. As you recall, no airborne battalions were programmed in the 20,000. However, one was programmed for the additional 30,000 and three more if we go up to the 273,000. Although not fully supported by ARVN, Mr. Thuan demands all four battalions now, with the implication that we will lose the war if we do not allow this! In this respect, since the arrival of the Thompson Group, who were preceded here by Mr. "Dato" Fenner, Police Commissioner in Malaya for over 25 years and who naturally is a strong advocate of police rather than military counter-insurgency control,[10] Diem and Thuan have tended to blame their defeats and shortcomings on American non-support to an increasing degree. I have agreed to the formation of one more airborne battalion which gives two regimental airborne groups. As only one battalion can be lifted by the airlift we have here at present and as 50% of the country is impossible for paradrop, I feel this is more than adequate. These battalions, if they are forced upon us, will also be cadred from ARVN units which will further water down the current five airborne battalions as well as divisional capability past the point of no return and seriously unbalance the ARVN force structure. Even the ARVN Airborne Commander is "discreetly" concerned over this quantity vs quality approach. Frankly, the GVN appears to feel they can get anything they want, regardless of MAAG recommendations by going through the Ambassador to top American levels. What we need to

[10] McGarr sent a lengthy analysis of his reasons for opposing the concept of police rather than military control in telegram SGN 693 to Lemnitzer, October 11. (National Defense University, Lemnitzer Papers, 1961 Eyes Only Messages)

Lemnitzer's memorandum to Taylor, October 12, endorsing McGarr's views is in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pp. 324–326.

win is National *control and coordination* of effort, not just hardware! I have alerted the Ambassador on this need and discussed it with him at some length. At present, he apparently agrees with me that we must present a united front but appears to be moving slowly on the problem.

I have told Mr. Thuan and the top commanders here that in my professional opinion, they have watered down the capability of the regular ARVN divisions beyond the danger point and I have strongly recommended that raiding these outfits to form special forces stop. The civilian top side here insists that this is the only way they can quickly build the military units with the proper esprit. In this respect, as you will recall, I have written letters to both President Diem and Mr. Thuan stating that units trained as Rangers are being used improperly on static guard duty and as Province Chiefs' body guards. A recent MAAG study shows a developing morale problem in the Ranger companies due to this misuse and poor support. I have also pointed out that the airborne units and the marine units in the strategic reserve are being used improperly which is breaking up their tactical integrity and cohesiveness as fighting units. This is also beginning to affect their morale. These small so-called elite groups lend themselves to misuse by the President through the Province Chiefs or by directive to ARVN as they are tailored in nice convenient packages. I have pointed this out in my attempts to convince Mr. Thuan that it would be unwise to form more airborne units. However, "airborne" has a magic connotation here and he is continuing to push for this. Actually, the facts of life for some time to come will be their continued use as regular infantry or truck transported units because of lack of airlift, airfields and large areas of operations. I cannot in good faith from my professional experience agree with the formation of new special units at the expense of the ARVN when it lowers the overall fighting capability of the entire armed forces. I do not believe the "psychological lift" claimed by the GVN compensates for an unbalanced Force Structure. This may be taken up over my head and, if so, I would appreciate your assistance. I have explained this situation to the Ambassador and as of now he agrees with me. However, GVN pressure could change this. If this continues, and if the communists continue to step up their timetable as is the case at present, we will be in bad shape to meet their growing conventional capability, already evidenced in the fighting in the north since 1 September.

I understand that State Department is again going to push for more Ranger companies in the 30,000 troop increase. In this respect, we have in the approved 30,000 troop increase two divisions which are badly needed, one each in the I and II Corps now being hit by the larger better equipped, better trained Viet Cong units infiltrating

in from Laos. With the three more airborne battalions being demanded, this will be impossible and we should remember that the insistence on these Rangers does not emanate from here. Although this is a year in the future and may sound academic now, I feel we must insist on holding the line against these special type units especially as they are too often being used improperly and, therefore, do not contribute to the overall military posture of the country as they could and should.

I have mentioned the possible step up of the communist timetable and feel this could be a determining factor in holding South Vietnam. I am firmly convinced that our country's actions in Laos, Berlin and Iran will determine whether or not the timetable out here is to be stepped up by the communists. This is another point which I feel must be *continually* stressed to the field marshals in the State Department who will then be wondering why, with all the aid and promises of assistance which they have already given us, we cannot hold South Vietnam. In this regard, at a Country Team meeting today, I tabled a recommendation that we take advantage of the many Washington offers of help to request that the solution in Laos include assurance that the Lao border be sealed or sanitized by political action—international if necessary. This is the best way to help us here. Of course, I have long fought for meaningful politico-military action to seal the Cambodian border without success. I feel it boils down to the fact that unless these points are made crystal clear over and over again in *all* dealings with these people in higher civilian levels, the military will be blamed for a situation here which is not of its own making and for which it has not been adequately supported by our country. As I am jealous of the professional good name of our Army, I do not wish it to be placed in the position of fighting a losing battle and being charged with the loss. Of course, we will continue the fight, but the ultimate battle will be won or lost as a result of DOD actions vis-à-vis State on military matters. I know you will continue to do all in your power to hold the line.

Although this is a frank objective reading from where I sit, I wish to emphasize strongly that I am *not* overly pessimistic or defeatist. Neither am I overly optimistic. I feel we still have a chance to pull this one out of the fire but that that chance is getting slimmer and slimmer due to the communist build up, the impact of past failures on our part to allocate adequate, timely resources to this country and the impact of possible future developments in Laos and elsewhere—not to mention the problems involved in adequately training the troops. Also, a continuing problem is the difficult job MAAG has without command authority of any kind whatsoever to get the GVN to take the proper politico-military measures which will adequately coordinate the overall counter-insurgency effort from

the viewpoint of required political-military-economic-psychological actions. These interlocking political actions need more pressure from our political side if they are to be accomplished in time!

With warmest personal regards,

Sincerely,

Lionel C. McGarr [11]
Lieutenant General, USA

[11] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

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160. Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation Between the Secretary of State and the Director of the Bureau of the Budget (Bell), Washington, October 12, 1961, 2:57 p.m. [1]

The Sec said Vietnam can be critical and we would like to throw in resources rather than people if we can. Can we in the Depts involved if the Pres directs it be done put the costs on it on a chit and go to Congress in early January for the necessary special action? B said no problem at all with respect to Defense. They have special authority for military aid. CIA no problem. Contingency fund exists for State and economic aid so that should mean this is all right. If the Sec wants a more precise answer B should put Hansen [2] in touch with whoever is working on it and it should be worked out before they go too far down the road.

[1] Source: Department of State, Rusk Files: Lot 72 D 192, Telephone Calls. Transcribed by Phyllis D. Bernau of the Office of the Secretary.

[2] Assistant Director of the Bureau of the Budget, Kenneth R. Hansen.

161. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam[1]

Washington, October 12, 1961—7:33 p.m.

428. Following for your background and guidance in preparing for General Taylor's visit.

General Taylor will be consulting with Ambassador, General McGarr, other members country team as appropriate, GVN officials and CINCPAC on additional courses of action that can immediately be taken to avoid further deterioration in South Viet-Nam and eventually contain and eliminate the Viet Cong threat. He will be examining possibilities of quickly improving effectiveness of GVN forces, including provision of additional equipment, manned if necessary by US personnel, to extent possible under civilian contract or MAAG cover, as well as possible means of speeding up and improving training GVN forces. He will also explore possibility further increasing size of GVN forces. Concurrently, he will want to look into what possibly could be accomplished by introduction various levels of SEATO or US forces into South Viet-Nam, considering role, composition, and best disposition of alternative force levels, taking account of political and psychological as well as military factors.

General Taylor will also want to examine whether all our military and economic aid is being applied to main problem of internal threat in South Viet-Nam, including its non-military dimensions. He will hope to determine whether greater simplicity and directness can be introduced into chain of economic and military responsibility between Washington and Saigon so as to permit faster reactions on our part. He will be examining all factors without regard to narrow fiscal considerations, on assumption that additional funding will be available if required and that funding should not inhibit us from now expending what may be required to save the situation as compared with incalculable costs that would result from large-scale hostilities involving US forces in Southeast Asia or loss of South Viet-Nam to Communists. General Taylor will hope to receive suggestions on unconventional forms of assistance which might also be brought to bear on this situation if we apply all our initiative and ingenuity.

With respect to GVN, General Taylor will, in his discretion and after consultation with Ambassador Nolting and General McGarr,

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/10–1261. Top Secret; Priority; Eyes Only Ambassador and General McGarr. Drafted by Johnson (G), cleared with Taylor and Rostow and S/S, initialed by Johnson for the Acting Secretary, and repeated to CINCPAC exclusively for Admiral Felt and PolAd.

also expect to talk with President Diem and other GVN officials in whatever terms it is felt are best calculated to bring about those additional political and military reforms which it is considered Diem can and should accomplish if present and contemplated additional US assistance is to be effective. Such assistance necessarily implies an even closer and more intimate relationship between USG and GVN. It will be important that Diem recognize that increase US assistance carries with it inevitably implications additionally involving US prestige, which may involve an increased US voice in GVN affairs.

Problems of ICC and Geneva accords that will inevitably arise from increased US support are of course recognized. Our general philosophy on this is that, while we do not seek to break those accords and will as long as possible attempt to maintain public posture of general compliance with them, we will not permit them materially to inhibit us in doing those things which need to be done. DRV is flagrantly disregarding accords, both with respect to Laos and South Viet-Nam, and ICC frustrated by DRV, its terms of reference, and attitude of Poland and India in carrying out its functions. Therefore, under international law GVN clearly entitled disregard accords at least up to extent they disregarded by DRV. Nevertheless recognize it important establish public and political base for any action which is clearly and publicly in contravention of accords. While GVN has done much in this regard, more remains to be done. Our tentative thinking is along lines of publication by GVN of Jorden white paper, followed by appeal to UN by friendly power on behalf of GVN for observers or other such action prior to action on our part that would clearly and publicly not be in consonance with Geneva accords. Timing of such action will of course require careful coordination and working out with GVN. Jorden, who is traveling with Taylor party, is bringing with him draft of white paper [2] for clearance and coordination with GVN and will discuss this matter further with you. However, in meanwhile would welcome any views you may have.

Although some members of press are traveling to Saigon on same plane as General Taylor, they are in no sense part of or members of his party nor do they have any special privileges or mandate to cover his mission. In spite of the presence of members of press, it is hoped that public aspects of visit can be minimized and serious working aspects maximized. General Taylor desires that

[2] The draft taken by Jorden may have been the one dated October 8, entitled "Communist Subversion and Infiltration in South Vietnam," a copy of which is *ibid.*, Vietnam Working Group Files: Lot 66 D 193, VN 1961 Presidential Program Psychological TF 26 through 31.

purely social aspects be kept to absolute minimum so as leave himself and party free as possible for large amount of work that will be required.

Ball

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162. Editorial Note

For text of National Security Action Memorandum No. 104, October 13, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, page 328. NSAM No. 104 was transmitted to the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence in a memorandum from McGeorge Bundy that conveyed the results of Presidential directives on Vietnam approved on October 11.

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163. Telegram From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Lemnitzer) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Felt) [1]

Washington, October 13, 1961.

SSO JCS 1596–61. 1. At a White House meeting today [2] to discuss directive to be issued to General Taylor, [3] President expressed concern over build-up of stories to effect U.S. is contemplating sending combat forces to Vietnam. He feels that too much emphasis is being put on this aspect and could well result in a tremendous let-down in Vietnamese morale if they expected such action and we decided otherwise. Accordingly, emphasis publicly is being put on fact Taylor will review entire situation particularly to determine if increase[s] in our current efforts are called for. However, you should know (and this is to be held most closely) General Taylor will also

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Lemnitzer Papers, 1961 Eyes Only Messages. Top Secret; Eyes Only. Repeated for information to McGarr.

[2] Presumably a reference to the National Security Council meeting which took place from 10:30 to 11:40 a.m. (Kennedy Library, JFK Log Book) No other record of the discussion at this meeting has been found.

[3] The President's instruction to Taylor is printed in Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares*, pp. 225–226.

give most discreet consideration to introduction of U.S. Forces if he deems such action absolutely essential.

2. Sec Def and I requested, and obtained, mention of fact that Taylor will review entire situation, to include political and economic as well as military aspects.

3. For your information, correspondents (including Alsop) are not part of or in any way related to Taylor mission. They are merely being given a ride to Saigon as a courtesy.

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164. Telegram From the Consulate General in Switzerland to the Department of State [1]

Geneva, October 13, 1961—6 p.m.

369. From Harriman. I am much gratified to learn of General Taylor's and Rostow's visit to Saigon. I trust that in addition to military appraisal, some analysis of political situation can be made. In my travels during past six months as well as here in Geneva, I find everywhere concern over Diem's dictatorial regime, Palace Guard, family and corruption. These comments come from friendly sources, both highest and lower levels, expressing view that after good early record Diem has become increasingly isolated, particularly since attempted coup last year. Various accounts indicate lack of confidence among military, provincial government officials, intellectuals, business, professional and university groups. There is general prophesy that another coup is apt to happen, in which case insurgents will not be as considerate of Diem as last year. The British come closer to recognizing our difficulties, since they see no alternative to Diem, but even they hope that increased pressures will be brought for major reforms, not alone in social and economic, but in political field, particularly elimination of undesirable family influence and broadening base of Diem Government.

I recognize extreme difficulties of the situation and have no recommendations to make from this distance, but believe we may well be sitting on powder keg that could blow up, conceivably not disastrous if it was touched off by constructive forces. I recognize

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/10–1361. Secret; Priority. Repeated to Saigon and passed to the White House. A copy of this telegram at the Kennedy Library has the following handwritten notation in the margin: "Sent to H[yannis] P[ort] 10/13. Pres saw." (Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Trips and Conferences Series, Vice President to the Far East)

that these are matters with which everyone in Washington is familiar. I only want to add my voice to those who believe more recognition must be given to political situation which no amount of military assistance or participation can cure.

I hope Jorden report can be released soon as most people have little comprehension of true nature Viet Minh aggression.

Martin

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165. Memorandum From the Deputy Director of the Vietnam Task Force (Wood) to the Director (Cottrell)[1]

Washington, October 13, 1961.

CHECK LIST

Rationale for U.S. Support

While rice potential of SEA and strategic geography of a peninsula extending to 10°N are important, real reason for communist desire takeover in Viet-Nam is to show rest of world how dangerous it is to be allied with U.S.

Problem

Too much aid; not enough judgment. War being fought without plan. Our own chain command and theirs. Can they make better use of what they receive?

Recommendations: Based on necessity of Quantum Jump

Political

An Aide-Mémoire to Diem: let it be known that you will permit the creation of two (not less) opposition parties with five deputies each in the National Assembly (123 deputies) provided these parties agree that the first priority is the defeat of the Viet Cong. If you do not agree, U.S. will find ways of criticizing you publicly for suppressing political freedom. This is necessary to improve your national and international prestige and gain further sympathy for increase international support. Practically, two small

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/10-1361. Top Secret. Initialed by Wood.

opposition parties full of ambitious and inexperienced leaders would cancel each other out and their foolishness would increase your prestige. It would be easy to arrange by elections to bring these people into National Assembly. Their speeches in National Assembly should receive brief, but factual press coverage. They should not be allowed to have their own newspapers.

Presents

1. Flood victims should get food, medicine and shelter now.

2. Provincial officials: 50% higher salaries and allowances than Saigon officials.

3. Air evacuation of civilian and military casualties: 24 doctors and 96 corpsmen and nurses (all Vietnamese, Filipino or Chinese) plus 12 aircraft (e.g. heliocouriers) loaned by U.S., but piloted and maintained by Vietnamese, Filipino or Chinese. Not more than six U.S. military doctors as advisers. Planes to be used only for medical air evacuation.

4. We will build 250 kw transmitter if Diem will agree that he or another top official will broadcast at least once a week.

5. Simplify USOM programs, reduce emphasis on industrial development; increase emphasis on training provincial administrators. Reduce training in U.S. (cultural shock); increase training in Viet-Nam.

6. Strengthen village defense, barbed wire, bamboo stockades, flares, mines, food control, dogs.

7. Trips by FSO's with MAAG advisers to get political reporting on provinces.[1]

Military

1. *Land Frontier*

General Taylor fly over it.
20 U.S. encadred Ranger Companies.
U.S. air supply frontier posts.
All means to give confidence to patrols—dogs, walkie-talkies, flares, armalites.

2. *Sea Frontier and Canals*

USOM has had great success in motorizing fishing junks and sampans. Sampans can be used for canal patrol. See attached photo.[2] Ask Ambassador to order MAAG Naval people to borrow USOM technicians and use their techniques now.

Role of 7th Fleet should be limited to patrolling 17th as show of force, reporting sightings to Vietnamese Navy and resupply.

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[1] Paragraph 7 was added by hand.
[2] Not found attached to the source text.

No one from a U.S. ship should board a VN junk.

Should we supply 20 small, simple Coast Guard boats to VN Navy for inshore patrol? Place two Filipino technicians on each (radio and engineer)?

3. *Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps*

Put one good VN NCO in each untrained CG and SDC company.

Double size of CG training facility.

Start immediately MAAG training and equipping of SDC.

4. *Areas under VC Control*

Install DF station at U.S. Embassy Phnom Penh to get better fixes.

Possible flying DF station on a Caribou; Caribou to carry napalm for use on radio station.

Use U.S. encadred Ranger companies to penetrate VC controlled areas for intelligence and sabotage.

Develop food control program with Thompson.

Overfly with talking planes (see Thompson).

5. *Province Chiefs and Chain of Command*

A fixed and limited number CG and SDC under sole command of Province Chief; all other forces under ARVN. Province Chiefs, as Civil Authorities, have right of appeal to Diem.

6. *Intelligence*

Further unification under Col. Y.

7. *Strategic Planning*

Diem must accept a joint ARVN-MAAG planning board, composition ARVN. Rangers or divisions?

8. *Foreign Troops*

U.S. troops to encadre VN Ranger companies.

One U.S. School-Troop Unit (Embtel 488, attached).[4]

One U.S. Engineer Unit.

One ChiNat Division.[5] (Embtel 488).

One USAF combat crew training team (Embtel 489, enclosed).[6]

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[4] Not printed.

[5] At this point the following sentence was crossed out: "Yes, give us strong recommendation. We are overcurbing and underusing the ChiNats. They cost us a lot and feel very frustrated (Burma, VN)."

[6] Not attached to the source text, but in this telegram, October 13, Nolting reported that the deployment of the Jungle Jim unit for training, research and development purposes, and photo reconnaissance work was "highly desirable." Nolting wrote that the Embassy had been assured by MAAG that the Jungle Jim unit would not engage "in missions, including airdrop against selected targets or undertake other operational missions, aside from photo reconnaissance, without our first refer-

(Continued)

9. *NVN*

We have handcuffed ourselves. Will cable.[7]

10. *Prisoner defection*

Simple, well publicized bounty and punishment system. If you are captured by force, you are killed or imprisoned. If you surrender, no charges. If you surrender and bring friends, big money. See Thompson.

Transportation

Emphasize air (landing strip program next six months); De-emphasize more roads for next six months (insufficient VN resources).

U.S.

Command Structure.

Direct delegation of authority to Ambassador from President placing him in control of all U.S. agencies and Departments represented in Viet-Nam?

Since VN is biggest war in world today and directly involves U.S., we need best command and command structure.

Play Down

Negotiations with Cambodia—waste of energy.

Bilateral (U.S.–GVN)—can't give them bigger commitment than they have.

SEATO—a drag.

Don't Forget

Jorden
Harriman

(Continued)
ring question to Department for decision." Nolting also offered his views on how the introduction of the aircraft and its personnel should be handled with the ICC (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5 MSP/10–1361)

[7] No subsequent cable on this subject from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saigon during the time of the Taylor mission was found.

166. Memorandum From Robert H. Johnson of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) [1]

Washington, October 14, 1961.

SUBJECT

Subjects for Exploration in Viet Nam

This memorandum contains a checklist of subjects that you may wish to explore during your trip to Viet Nam. It does not pretend to be a comprehensive listing of all of the questions that might be examined; I have eliminated many subjects that will be on everyone's minds and probably on everyone's lists. In the attachment to this memo, however, I have made a very brief listing of various sorts of limited holding actions that have been considered at various times in the course of work on SEA Task Force papers.

I. Military

1. *ARVN Deployment.* Is the ARVN really ninety percent committed to counterinsurgency operations? At any given time, what percentage of the ARVN is engaged in patrolling activities or offensive actions against the VC? (If you attempt to get figures which separate out ARVN casualties from those for the Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps, you ought also to get a breakdown of VC casualties which indicates which were ARVN-inflicted, which CG and SDC-inflicted. The GVN casualty figures alone, while reflecting the fact that the CG and SDC are more vulnerable and therefore more often attacked, will not necessarily prove that the ARVN is passive.)

2. *Status of the Over-All Plan.* While progress on getting GVN approval of the over-all plan is slow, the ARVN Staff is said to have approved over-all Corps-Area plans submitted by the corps commanders. Do these fit together to provide an over-all scheme of action?

3. *Diem's Attitudes Toward Military Planning and Operations.* Is it true, as I have heard alleged, that Diem is not really interested in a major effort against the VC at this time; that he views this as a long-term problem which can only be dealt with on a very long-term basis; that he therefore prefers to concentrate on improvement of communications and to base his military planning primarily on the gradual extension of GVN control outward from Saigon?

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, 10/16/61–10/19/61. Top Secret. A copy was sent to Bagley.

4. *Identification of VC Concentrations.* What can we do to identify with greater precision the location of VC units in areas such as Zone D where we know there are large organized units? More photo recon? Send in small ranger units?

5. *The Evaluation Center.* Is full use being made of the evaluations produced by the U.S. evaluation center in the embassy? Should the GVN be encouraged to develop its own war room comparable to our evaluation center? What is the status of the GVN Central Intelligence Organization? (We give the GVN information based upon our evaluations, but do not give them access to the center, apparently because some of our information is obtained from GVN personnel through non-official channels.)

6. *U.S. Advisory Personnel.* Would it be desirable to get U.S. advisory personnel down to platoon level and permit them to engage in all military operations? (The Special Forces Officer whom I heard recommend such action indicated that it would require 400 additional personnel.) In order to increase the number of U.S. advisors in the field with combat experience, should brevet rank be given to American NCO's?

7. *Special Forces Personnel.* Could more U.S. Special Forces Personnel be usefully employed? Is the supply of such personnel to the field too erratic? (A Special Forces Officer indicated that at times he was the only such officer in VietNam; this problem has allegedly since been solved.)

8. *Self-Confidence and Offensive Spirit of the ARVN.* Is there a real problem of increasing the self-confidence and offensive spirit of the ARVN? If so, which of the various R and D projects directed toward this problem show most promise? (e.g., dogs, defoliation).

a. You recently expressed some skepticism on the subject of defoliation. As I understood your argument, it was that defoliation simply cleared the way for the VC. But isn't this a bit like the argument that one shouldn't build roads because they run in two directions? The question is not whether defoliation may help the enemy as well as our side, it is rather one of the net benefit. It seems to me that a guerrilla force benefits more from forest cover than an anti-guerrilla force.

b. The MAAG proposes to use dogs on static sentry duty; Godel's concept was that they should be used with patrols to help increase self-confidence by reducing prospects for ambush. Isn't use on patrols the better employment?

9. *Exotic Weapons.* What is the current view of the R and D test center of such items as the micro-jet, Tetrahedron and Lazy Dog?

10. *Doctrine for Use of Helicopters and Helio-Couriers.* Does MAAG and the GVN have a clear military concept for use of helicopters and Helio-Couriers? How many more could be usefully employed? (Maintenance of helicopters has been a problem, but I believe that

we are prepared to supply additional maintenance personnel through Air America.)

11. *The Radio Location Effort.* In view of the continuous increase in the number of VC transmitters and the inherent problems involved in location of them, does it make sense to continue to devote resources and personnel to this effort? If it does, how can the GVN be made to take a more cooperative attitude toward the effort?

12. *Deployment and Use of the 30,000 Man Increase.* The President's approval of the 30,000 man increase in GVN armed forces (which will follow the 20,000 man increase now going forward) was given with the understanding that there would be agreement between the USG and the GVN on the use to which these forces were put. What are MAAG's plans? Do they make sense? What is the status of GVN work on the problem? Have we begun to think about whether a further increase beyond the 30,000 would be desirable, and about the use to which such forces might be put? (You will recall that Diem asked for a total increase of 100,000.)

13. *Training and Use of the Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps.* Is training of the CG proceeding as rapidly as it could? Wouldn't it be desirable to have the training and equipping of the CG and the SDC proceed simultaneously? (At present the CG is trained and equipped first and then it trains the SDC. The SDC has wholly inadequate weapons until it completes its training.) Could more be done (perhaps with mobile training teams) to train the CG where they are stationed rather than take them into special training camps? Do the concepts for use of the CG and SDC developed by the MAAG make sense? (A training plan and concept of use was submitted by the MAAG to the GVN in August and GVN comment is awaited.) SDC personnel are now often deployed in a way that makes no military sense. Is the CG deployed in areas with which the personnel are generally familiar?

II. Economic

(You will, of course, be exploring the current validity of the several programs of emergency economic and social action contained in the Staley Report.[2] I have commented on those programs below on which I have some question.)

1. *Program Priorities.* Are there U.S. projects now being conducted in Viet Nam which interfere with the effort against the VC by absorbing the time of President Diem and other top personnel and by diverting resources from essential military tasks? On the other hand, to what extent are important economic programs being cut back by the GVN because of concentration on the military threat or

[2] See Document 93

an unwillingness to mobilize necessary domestic resources? (For example, it is said that agriculturists and nurses being graduated from U.S.-supported schools are not being used on the grounds that GVN resources must be concentrated on the security problem. USOM is presently reviewing the Staley proposals and on-going programs with a view to determining priorities. It is not easy for any USOM, caught up in an existing program with every element of the program supported by proponents within the USOM, to re-orient its program. Outside advice could be most useful.)

2. *Village Alarm System.* What is the current status of the village alarm system? I do not know the details on this, but I have the impression that there may still be unresolved questions between USOM and the MAAG or the R and D center with respect to the kind of system that should be installed. This is one of the most important economic projects now going forward in VietNam.

3. *Diem's Road Program.* Does Diem's recently developed road program make any sense? A member of the recently returned Army Civic Action team indicated that it was grossly over-ambitious and that planning and execution were not adequately related to real priorities. Can it be cut down to essentials by agreement with the GVN on a first-stage program?

4. *Rural Dispensary System.* Are there ways that the existing rural dispensary system can be improved? For example, it has been indicated that supplies of anti-biotics intended to meet some weeks of need are exhausted within a couple of days of delivery while aspirin and other less wanted items are in more than adequate supply. (Note that the Staley Report's recommendations on the rural medical program concentrated exclusively on the care of the wounded. They thus reflected pre-occupation with the security aspects of the medical problem. A much broader approach is needed.)

5. *Rice Shortage.* We shall be tackling the immediate problem created by the flooding in the Delta area. But what is the over-all rice situation? (Two months or so ago the embassy asked for some PL 480 rice. Rice was offered, I believe under Title II as a local currency sale. Partly because they were asked to pay for it in piasters and partly because the situation seemed to ease, the GVN turned down this proposal.)

III. Political-Social-Psychological

(I have included in this category several items which are economic or military in content or execution, but which have primarily social or psychological purposes.)

1. *Attitudes of Troops and Local Officials.* This is the most important non-military element involved in obtaining the cooperation of the

villagers. It is said that Diem has disciplined and removed an increasing number of local officials guilty of graft, excessive harshness and ineffectiveness. Is the progress significant or only marginal? How can he be stimulated into further action?

Troops are also said to treat the local populace very harshly. The Civic Action Team is said to be recommending in its report that orders be issued to direct that speed limits shall be enforced against military vehicles and to enforce other criminal laws within the army. Will this be effective? Is the army's behavior in part related to low pay (e.g., as when a soldier pays an extortionately low price for a chicken)? What can be done about the lack of adequate provision for the dependents of armed forces personnel when they are away from their homes? (Unlike the situation in most Asian countries, the families do not live with the troops in the field and so do not benefit from the soldier's rice ration etc. I am not certain to what extent, if any, this problem was created by the redeployments which we have insisted upon under the CIP.)

2. *Civic Action.* The report of the U.S. Army Civic action team [1] will have just been submitted to the MAAG. You will want to review it. One question that will need to be examined is whether adequate provision is made for giving funds to the ARVN for civic action purposes—to buy well-drilling equipment, simple brick-making machines, etc. A small immediate amount was recommended and may have been provided, but longer term needs will also require examination.

There is an important limitation in existing DOD military directives on this subject. They apparently provide that civic action may be conducted only to the extent that it does not interfere with military operations. If strictly applied this rule could bar all civic action in SVN. Obviously in a place like SVN where programs of this kind could make a most important contribution to the security effort, it is very short-sighted indeed to view them simply as competitive with military operations.

Would it facilitate GVN acceptance of civic action if, instead of submitting our own report and waiting for months for the GVN to react to it, we got together with someone like General Minh who has his own program and, using that program as a base, worked our own ideas into it? This, incidentally, is a technique that might be explored for more general application. Our general approach has been to prepare a lengthy report on a subject and submit to the GVN for consideration. That may be an excessively formal and not very effective way to get action on military and non-military programs.

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[1] Not further identified

3. *Montagnards.* A U.S.-developed plan for assisting the Montagnards [4] has recently been submitted to the GVN. You may want to examine it and determine what can be done to speed action.

4. *Agrarian Reform.* The Washington Task Force received a report some time ago that the agrarian reform program had about ground to a halt. [4] What, if anything, in the way of U.S. assistance or otherwise can be done to revive it?

5. *Radio and TV.* I have attached copies of the memos Donald Wilson left with us. [5] As I have been given the picture, past delays on the radio program have been due partly to arguments between ourselves and the GVN over objectives and partly to disagreements among the American technicians involved. Disagreement over objectives has revolved primarily around Diem's desire to have sufficient power (100 KW or more) to reach into North Vietnam and into other parts of Southeast Asia and our desire to concentrate upon a system directed entirely toward the internal communications problem. In August 1960 there was agreement with the GVN on our concept.

There are those who believe that much better cooperation could be obtained from the GVN if power were increased. (Diem has indicated in the past that once we have the station built, he will himself procure the equipment needed to increase the power.) The additional cost involved is a relatively minor element. Greater power would require a higher tower in Saigon which would have the additional advantage of providing the kind of tower required if a TV program is undertaken. However, the Country team has recently reviewed this power question and concluded that we should not reopen it, but should proceed with the agreed program. You may want to determine what continuing importance, if any, the power question has.

Lack of progress since August 1960 is caused in part by lack of trained personnel. We have never had more than two engineers in the field and have relied upon inadequately qualified GVN personnel to do much of the work. When the newly constructed radio tower in Hue fell to the ground because of inadequate engineering the USOM brought Chinese technicians from Hong Kong to supervise that part of the undertaking. At present there is *no* radio engineer in the USOM and ICA/Washington is having great difficulty finding one. This is primarily a Washington problem, but perhaps the USOM could explore the possibility of bringing in Chinese or other Asian engineers.

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[4] Not further identified.

[5] Not found attached to the source text.

Non-project aid (commercial imports) are being used to provide some radio receivers. This arrangement, however, provides very haphazard distribution. The ICA Desk officer has been working on a proposal to procure receivers through project aid. This would permit the U.S. to subsidize purchase by picking up the difference between the purchase price and a lower selling price. It would also give us some control over distribution so that they would get out to the villages instead of being concentrated wholly in Saigon. This proposal has not yet been put to the field; you might want to explore it. You might also want to explore the feasibility of Japanese aid in this area.

The principal problem foreseen on TV is the problem of servicing under conditions where such skills are in very short supply and where security is very bad. A plan developed by Togoland to deal with this problem has been, I believe, sent to Saigon as a possible model. It is, I am told, a rather expensive and elaborate program.

Robert H. Johnson [*]

[Attachment]

Memorandum Prepared by Robert H. Johnson of the National Security Council Staff [†]

Washington, undated.

Check List of Limited Holding Actions in Southeast Asia From SEA Task Force Papers

1. Small Thai and SVN paramilitary units in southern Laos.

2. Army engineer construction battalion to Thailand for training and work on Bangkok by-pass.

3. Rotation of U.S. forces to Thailand for combined training, or stationing of a brigade task force team there.

4. U.S. aircraft and personnel for a defoliant spray program.

5. Expand naval capabilities by (a) expediting radios and motors for junks; (b) use of U.S. ships and aircraft for interdiction, (c) providing GVN more small boats under MAP.

6. Expedite encadrement of FAR.

7. Resettle Meo to highland area of south Laos on Viet Nam border.

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[*] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

[†] Top Secret.

8. Expedite delivery of equipment to Thai border police.

9. Help Thais establish Mekong River patrol.

10. Strengthen suitable bases in southern Laos such as Savannekhet, Pakse, Attopeu, and Saravane for operations by Thai, VN and Lao units. (Idea here, which has never been fully developed in discussions, is to supplement paramilitary action referred to in par. 1 above by creating strong bases in south Laos from which probing actions could be mounted to keep enemy off balance.)

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167. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, October 14, 1961—4:33 p.m.

435. Ref Embtel 449. [2] Task Force VN. Basis your telegram, we recognize need to fix aid levels now in order improve relations with GVN and hope result will be accelerated preparation of concrete plans in military, economic and social spheres. Ambassador authorized inform GVN of FY 1962 non-project aid level of $140 million, consisting of $115 million Supporting Assistance and $25 million PL 480 commodities. As indicated Reftel, actual drawdowns subject to agreed criteria. This commitment contingent prompt GVN implementation of agreed exchange reforms. Also concur maintenance of unused pipeline at approximately present level ($40) million to help achieve political objectives.

Cannot fix level now on grant projects and development loans. Assume main GVN focus is on commodity import level and have strained full effort to reach this figure in expectation this decision will help you.

Ball

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/10-761. Secret. Drafted by Walter Furst (ICA), cleared with Fowler and FitzGerald (ICA) and U. Alexis Johnson, and initialed by Johnson for the Acting Secretary.

[2] Dated October 7, telegram 449 made several recommendations regarding U.S. economic assistance to Vietnam and indicated the Embassy's desire to firm up the U.S. Government's negotiating position promptly "as GVN's planning and willingness to move is in part dependent on indication US position on aid matters." (*Ibid.*)

168. Estimates Prepared in the Department of Defense and Other United States Agencies[1]

Washington, October 15, 1961.

Suggestion Number 1

1. *Deploy a U.S. Combat Unit to SVN to Train RVNAF.*

2. *Brief.* It will probably be difficult to make RVNAF units available for unit training. If they can be made available, possibly on a rotational basis, and a U.S. unit is used as proposed, RVNAF unit effectiveness can probably be increased. The proposed U.S. unit could possibly be deployed in connection with the CINCPAC exercise program. It should be noted, however, that the U.S. already has a large MAAG in South Vietnam and that CINCPAC has proposed almost a 50% increase to be effective in November and December of this year. It is also understood informally that the Chief, MAAG Vietnam will request another 300-man augmentation to be effective in January and February, 1962. These facts should be considered in connection with this proposal and with other related proposals summarized in this folder.

3. *Availability.* If the unit selected is from USARYIS or from Schofield, it could probably be made available relatively soon, possibly within 15 days.

4. *Estimate of Effectiveness.* Effectiveness would be dependent upon the regularity with which RVNAF units could be made available for

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OASD ISA Files: FRC 64 A 2382, 092 Vietnam 1961, Top Secret. Printed here are the first 4 of 20 estimates bound together and apparently given to the members of the Taylor Mission prior to their departure. A note on the table of contents page reads: "The summaries in this folder represent preliminary estimates which were prepared, in the limited time available, at action officer level in DOD, the Joint Staff, and the Services. They are furnished for the information and convenience of this party. Each of the problems will be completely staffed within the next two weeks." The estimates not printed include: (5) increase MAAG personnel as necessary to place advisers at company level, (6) expedite training of civil guard and self defense corps, (7) provide large-scale helo support to RVNAF for increased combat mobility, (8) provide GVN all technical assistance possible, (9) provide RVNAF with STOL aircraft capability with both medium and small aircraft, (10) provide ARVN army with organic air support capability, (11) provide RVNAF with jet aircraft, (12) increase pay of RVNAF including conscripts, (13) expedite GVN junk force and shallow draft boat company programs, (14) provide U.S. naval assistance in interdiction of Viet Cong junk traffic, (15) provide RVN navy with additional small ships through MAP, (16) undertake expedited construction program in SVN (airfields, roads, port facilities, etc.), (17) undertake with GVN a program of small airfield construction to exploit STOL aircraft capabilities, (18) use U.S. military aircraft for logistic support within SVN, (19) undertake defoliant spray program, and (20) provide increased bounties for information or capture of Viet Cong and increase covert efforts. A note on the source text indicates that the last suggestion was being explored by the Central Intelligence Agency.

training and upon the manner in which the language barrier was overcome. Generally, it is believed that considerable improvement could be achieved.

5. *Acceptability.* The Chief, MAAG Vietnam favors this proposal. Diem has been opposed to deployment in Vietnam of U.S. combat units, but might reconsider in light of the current situation. Diem's fullest support is a prerequisite if the program is to be effective. The position of CINCPAC on this specific proposal is not known at this time. Like other proposals herein, this proposal, if implemented, would be in violation of the Geneva Accord.

Suggestion Number 2

1. *Station a U.S. Combat Unit (Battalion or Larger) at Tourane.*

2. *Brief.* Stationing of such a force at Tourane could relieve GVN forces for other duties. It would probably be correlated with the stationing of another such force at a port in the south. It would demonstrate U.S. presence in the country. It might be used to assist in the program referred to in Suggestion No. 1. The proposal might be accomplished, in part at least, in connection with the CINCPAC exercise program. Hanoi would probably be uneasy at the presence of such a U.S. force so close to the 17th Parallel. DRV might test the seriousness of such an effort so close to its borders by subjecting the force and its LOC's to harassment, ambush, and guerrilla attack. Political and psychological objectives would probably, initially at least, be realized.

3. *Availability.* In event the decision is made to implement this proposal, the force could be made available relatively soon, possibly in as little as 15 days.

4. *Effectiveness.* Implementation of this proposal would increase the combat capability and the morale of the RVNAF. It would probably bolster the morale of the Vietnamese people, and enhance the prestige of the Diem regime. In addition, it would contribute to the security of the port area, and its capabilities might be exploited in training.

5. *Acceptability.* As would be the case with many other suggestions this proposal would involve a violation of the Geneva Accords. Diem has been opposed to stationing U.S. combat units in South Vietnam, but, in view of the current situation, might favor this proposal at this time. The position of CINCPAC on this proposal is not known.

Suggestion Number 3

1. *Deploy U.S. Combat Engineer Battalion (Army or Navy) to SVN for Support and Training Purposes.*

2. *Brief.* This suggestion is closely related to Suggestions 16 and 17 and to other suggestions. If implemented, the proposal would make a significant contribution to the effectiveness of the RVNAF. The unit could assist in unit training if Diem would insure support of the training program (possibly by making RVN Army units available on a rotational basis). Use of this battalion to assist in road, port and airfield construction would enhance combat capabilities of RVNAF, and would facilitate the support of units in isolated areas. In view of the number of bridges being blown by the Viet Cong, the unit should probably be capable of considerable bridge construction and repair. The proposal might be implemented, in part at least, in connection with the CINCPAC exercise program. There is a related requirement for a similar unit to construct a by-pass road in Thailand (Chachoengsao–Prachinburi).

3. *Availability.* Unless additional requirements arose because of heightened tensions in other areas, the unit could probably be made available from CONUS sources, and could be operational in South Vietnam in less than six months. In event it was decided to utilize the USARYIS battalion on Okinawa, the time requirement could be considerably reduced.

4. *Effectiveness.* The unit would further the combat capability of the RVNAF. It would assist the road, airfield, and port construction programs, and possibly other infrastructure projects. It could help in the training of counterpart RVNAF units, if these units could be made available periodically for training.

5. *Acceptability.* CINCPAC recently supported a similar proposal for Thailand (see paragraph 2 above). Diem was originally opposed to deployment of U.S. combat units to South Vietnam, but in view of the current situation, might reconsider in this case. As in the case of other proposals, this proposal, if implemented, would be in violation of the Geneva Accords.

Suggestion Number 4

1. *Station US logistic units in South Vietnam to assist RVNAF.*

2. *Brief.*

a. Strictly speaking, this proposal is not in consonance with the Geneva accords. In view of this and our past experience in Laos it might be more appropriate to increase logistic support capability through suggestion 2, i.e. augmentation of the MAAG. Under this proposal (#4) the personnel would be working types rather than advisors. During General Craig's visit to South Vietnam in August 1961, the MAAG Personnel stated that the logistic support was sufficient for the current forces (150,000–170,000). However, expansion of the forces to 200,000 would tax the country's resources, i.e.,

availability of skilled and semi-skilled labor and maintenance and supply facilities.

b. A US logistic force, composed of selected direct support, general support, and depot units, could be deployed to appropriate locations in South Vietnam to provide for the receipt, storage, issue, and maintenance of MAP equipment as required. Such actions would result in more efficient distribution and maintenance of MAP equipment and supplies needed to buildup the RVNAF. The deployment of US logistic units to South Vietnam would be beneficial in the initial deployment of US combat forces should such a decision be forthcoming.

c. The introduction of US logistic units may retard the development of an adequate in-country logistic posture unless measures are taken concurrently to insure that the build-up in the RVNAF includes sufficient logistic units to provide for a properly balanced force. The US units could then be withdrawn as qualified indigenous units become available to take over their missions.

d. Current US Army logistic forces are austere. Diversion of forces to support in-country forces will degrade the capability to support our own forces.

3. *Availability*

a. The force tabs which have been developed for augmentation and build-up of forces in Europe leaves only an understrength unbalanced logistic force for deployment. Therefore, availability of CONUS support units cannot be determined until specific logistic missions are defined. Each must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

b. The only theater logistic force considered to be available is the Army's 9th Logistical command on Okinawa. This type of contingency is within its mission assignment. It is organized at reduced strength and would have to be augmented by selected logistic operating units from CONUS. As presently organized, it could form the nucleus of a logistic force to function separately and/or train in-country logistic units. Other theater forces are capable of carrying out only essential peacetime operations.

4. *Estimate of Effectiveness.* It is considered that the introduction of US logistic forces will improve the effectiveness of the in-country logistic systems.

5. *Acceptability to South Vietnam.* There are indications that this proposal might be acceptable to President Diem.

169. Editorial Note

The Taylor Mission departed Washington on the afternoon of Sunday, October 15. In addition to Taylor and Rostow, the mission included Sterling Cottrell; Rear Admiral Luther C. Heinz, Brigadier General William H. Craig, Brigadier General Edward G. Lansdale; Colonel Robert M. Levy, USAF (J-3, JCS); Colonel Albert W. Campbell, USMC (J-4); Dr. George W. Rathjens (ARPA); William Jorden, Policy Planning Council, Department of State; James W. Howe, International Cooperation Agency; David R. Smith, Central Intelligence Agency; Lieutenant Colonel Thomas C. Steinhauser, USA (J-2); Lieutenant Commander Worth H. Bagley, USN, Naval Aide to General Taylor; and Major James W. Dingman, USA, Army Aide to General Taylor. Andrew Hatcher, associate press secretary to President Kennedy, was included in the mission, but did not make the trip. A representative of the CINCPAC staff was to join the party at Honolulu and William H. Godel was to join the party at Saigon. Taylor, who planned to wear civilian clothes, asked that there be no military honors, social functions, press briefings, or interviews. (Telegram 429 to the Embassy in Vietnam, October 12, Department of State, Central Files, 120.155K/10-1261)

The mission arrived at CINCPAC headquarters in Honolulu on the evening of October 15. Taylor recalls that the following morning the mission received an exhaustive briefing on the situation in Southeast Asia from Admiral Harry D. Felt, Commander in Chief, Pacific. Admiral Felt was convinced the situation in Vietnam was critical and needed prompt United States assistance. At the same time, he also stressed the importance of getting Diem to keep his provincial governors from intervening in military matters and to overcome a propensity of his commanders to sit on static defensive positions. Regarding the need for United States forces in South Vietnam, Felt was inclined to favor the introduction of logistic units, including engineer and helicopter units for selective assistance to the Vietnamese, but to withhold combat forces for the time being. In the long run, he saw no answer to the problem of halting infiltration short of placing sizable ground forces, preferably SEATO troops, in Laos across the Ho Chi Minh trails. See Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares*, pages 227-228, and *Pentagon Papers, Gravel Edition*, volume II, pages 83-84. Felt's report on the October 16 briefing of the Taylor Mission was sent to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in telegram 180250Z, October 18. (Office of Naval History, CINCPAC Message Files)

The mission left Honolulu the evening of October 16 and arrived in Saigon during the morning of October 18.

170. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President's Military Representative (Taylor) [1]

Honolulu, October 16, 1961.

SUBJECT

A Plan for CINCPAC to Prepare in the Next Two Weeks

1. I believe it would be useful if CINCPAC would prepare for our examination on the return of your mission to Honolulu an additional plan. The plan would consist of limited but systematic harassment by U.S. naval and air power of North Viet-Nam. It would not envisage, at our initiative, the landing of U.S. forces north of the 17th parallel for sustained fighting; but it might include hit-and-run naval and air action to place and remove landing parties to destroy key military bases and installations. The plan would be designed to minimize civilian casualties.

2. The plan would require, and be based on a detailed analysis of North Vietnamese military installations, especially on installations related to the Viet-Cong offensive in the south; and on a detailed analysis of the North Vietnamese economy. It may be that Admiral Felt would like to request the prompt dispatch from Washington of the best transport and economic experts on the North Vietnamese economy from CIA.

3. The considerations underlying this concept are the following:

a. It is apparent that it will be difficult to produce a prompt and radical improvement in the tactics, organization, and direction of Diem's forces. This we must seek to do; but the pace of increased Viet-Cong pressure may outpace the maximum that persuasion and bargaining can bring about soon.

b. It is apparent that the highest authorities in Washington and Saigon will resist the introduction of new forces on a scale capable of producing a rapid change in the situation. We may find—in air-reinforcement—a move which would bring about such a turning-point; but we can not be satisfied with such a proposal on the evidence presently available to us.

c. The underlying situation we confront is that Communist strategy is—as always—working around our main strength (the Seventh Fleet), and exploiting our main weaknesses: Diem; and the political limitations on the role of white men in an Asian guerrilla war. I believe we have a responsibility to see what could be done by exploiting their fundamental weakness, (the vulnerability of the Hanoi-Haiphong complex) and our main strength (naval and air power).

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-015-69. Secret.

4. I am, of course, aware of the political problem of creating an international setting in which a substantial part of the international community would regard this action as legitimate. This would have to be carefully checked out; and I am only suggesting that we have in hand a carefully tooled precision plan to match the concept. But I believe the political and diplomatic problem is not insuperable given the Jorden Report; [2] given the fact that we would not be setting out to conquer North Viet-Nam, but only to harass until it closed to communicate with supply, and infiltrate its agents in the South [*sic*]; given the fact that this move could be legitimately presented to the U.N. as a way of stopping a form of international banditry which must be stopped—by the U.N. or some other instrument—if we are to have a world of law.

5. I am also, of course, aware that the possibilities of escalation would have to be carefully considered. We would have to be prepared for an overt attack across the 17th parallel; a Chinese Communist entrance into the war; a Soviet reaction in Berlin or elsewhere. But I see nothing we can do to save South Viet-Nam and Southeast Asia which does not require measuring these risks; and I think this form of graduated air-naval harassment would be a real puzzler for them— just as guerrilla war is for us. Moreover, there are real inhibitions in Hanoi and Moscow against getting the Chinese Communists into Hanoi; real inhibitions in Moscow against nuclear war.

6. Finally, it should be clear that this kind of action would be a supplement to—not a substitute for—efforts to aid Diem. It is designed to produce a favorable turning point in the guerrilla war; it would not end it. Therefore, the examination of how Diem's and our own resources might better be utilized must, of course, go forward.

W.W. Rostow [3]

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[2] See footnote 2, Document 161.

[3] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

171. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, October 16, 1961—1 p.m.

495. Pursuant Embtel 488 [2] following analysis and preliminary recommendations submitted.

In recent requests for additional US commitments to SVN Diem's govt is acting in light of present security conditions in SVN and their estimate of increasing pressures in future. There is no evidence of panic, and fact is that Diem and his govt, if they do not win out, are so committed that they will have to go down fighting or be ousted by coup d'etat. Recent requests for additional US help have come as result calculations to bolster GVN against following: evidence of increased Communist determination and accelerated organization in SVN, the Laotian situation as seen by GVN at present and potential infiltrations, GVN concern about a possible Korean-type attack, present size of SVN armed forces and time required to recruit, equip, and train additional forces, and time required to bring into effect crash economic-social programs. Diem has given up, at least temporarily, some of his basic philosophy on how to win struggle by asking, first for a bilateral security treaty with US, and secondly and perhaps alternatively for the dispatch of US combat forces (even though ostensibly for guard duty, not for combat unless attacked).

Obvious first question from US point of view is whether or not world balance of power is sufficiently affected by what happens in SVN to cause us to take measures necessary to prevent loss of SVN to Communists. In light of factors as seen from here, physical, moral, and psychological, answer would appear to be clearly affirmative.

As previously reported, a major factor causing increased GVN anxiety and leading to substantial additional requests of US by GVN in last week is situation in Laos and GVN view that approaching solution there is going to transfer communist pressure and force from that country to SVN. Not only GVN, but also ARVN (at least its leaders) strongly hold this view. To what extent it is a factor in public morale is not yet clear. This mission has already (Embtel 373 [3] and others) submitted its recommendations on this subject as it affects SVN. All indications, however, point to a negotiated solution

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/10-1661. Secret; Niact. Repeated to CINCPAC for General Taylor, Geneva for Harriman, Taipei, Bangkok, Vientiane, Paris, London, and Phnom Penh.

[2] Dated October 13. (*Ibid.*, 751K.5-MSP/10-1361)

[3] Document 133.

in Laos, eventuating in a neutral govt under Souvanna Phouma. The main focus of US attention and diplomatic endeavor seems now to be on how to assure strict neutrality, including the prevention of the use of Laotian territory for Communist aggressive purposes against Laos' neighbors, by means of a proper composition of a Laotian Govt and an international treaty. I should point out in this connection that the GVN cannot be brought to believe (at least, I cannot bring them to believe) that paper guarantees on this score, plus any ICC mechanism comprising Poland, India, and Canada, will in fact protect SVN's western border. They have had similar guarantees in their own country, and these have not worked All evidence we have here points to conclusion that, if the Communist strategists are willing to settle for a neutral Laos at this time, it is for the purpose of concentrating their attack upon SVN, utilizing a neutral Laos for the purpose to whatever extent proves necessary. We have, however, done our best to persuade Diem and others that US policy vis-à-vis Laos is not inconsistent with our determination to protect SVN. We have had a certain measure of success in this, although one should not assume that their failure strongly to dissent, here or in Geneva, indicates consent or even concurrence on the part of these people. They do not think it is polite or productive to argue, but they do make up their own minds and determine their own course of action on the basis of their own judgment. They have made up their minds that the presently-envisioned settlement [in] Laos is going to make things harder for them, and they are now trying to build hedges against that.

This is major reason for their request for US reinforcements, involving Diem's breaking away, in part at least, from his long-held belief that a victory over communism here, if it is to be enduring, must be achieved by Vietnamese sacrifice and manpower alone. In requesting US reinforcements (and thinking about inviting Chinese), he has adopted an expedient which runs against his own convictions, and he is apparently willing to accept the attendant diminution of his own stature as an independent and self-reliant national leader.

If, then, a major cause of the deterioration in SVN cannot be attacked in Laos (or the proposed remedy there cannot be convincingly sold to the GVN), our alternative is to go all out to reinforce this country internally. This would seem to involve even faster, more far-reaching and more expensive measures than those now in train or in prospect. The measures can, I think, be considered under two headings—those designed to protect from external attack and/or large-scale infiltrations, and those designed to strengthen internal cohesion, to create national will and unity necessary to overcome present large-scale guerrilla activity.

Under measures against external attack, following have been and should be further considered:

1. Means to seal 17th parallel and borders with Laos and Cambodia; defoliated strip, barbed wire (electrified?), mines, patrols, posts, other means. Use of US combat engineer battalions to help with construction.
2. US combat forces, as requested, to be stationed near 17th parallel and possibly other places (towns) in high plateau near Lao border, to free ARVN troops for counter-guerrilla action.
3. Additional fighter-bomber aircraft; additional transport aircraft; best means of supplementing shortage Vietnamese pilots and maintenance personnel (US civilian-contract personnel for non-combat operations commends itself to US).
4. Use of forces other SEATO countries (possibly Philippines or Thailand) for above purposes.

With any such far-reaching measures on US side, I think that we have right and obligation to assure Diem takes extensive steps on his side to strengthen his govt politically. These measures would relate to (a) organization, (b) rallying mass support, and (c) unifying local elements (i.e., educated class) in support of govt. Steps in these three areas would to some extent be overlapping since improving governmental organization likely for example have favorable effect other areas, while at same time being important in itself for efficient prosecution of war against VC.

List our suggestions these three areas being further refined. While not complete or unalterable, they do indicate some useful steps which we believe should be taken in both Diem's interest and our interest of preserving free VN, under following headings:

A. Govt organization at both national and local levels.
B. Mass support measures.
C. Gaining broader support.
D. Educational class.
E. Tax reform.
F. Financial reform.

None of these areas are new, and many have been previously tried, with some, but not rapid enough, results. A very careful balance has to be struck between the ideal and the possible, assuming Diem's continuance at the helm and given his extraordinary blend of quality, fortitude, deep conviction, determination, lack of political instinct, lack of organizing and administrative ability and many others.

Your subsequent message this subject [4] delayed in transmission and just arrived. Will be prepared to discuss thoroughly.

Nolting

[4] Not further identified.

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172. Briefing Paper Prepared by the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

No. 2 *Saigon, October 17, 1961.*

POSSIBLE ACTIONS BY GVN AS QUID PRO QUO FOR ADDITIONAL U.S. SUPPORT

I. Organizational steps:

1. Retain Thuan in one of three jobs he now holds, but appoint capable officials to other two jobs in order permit all three of these key positions function adequately.

2. Delegate real coordinating authority to the three coordinating "super ministers".

3. Flesh out delegation of authority to Field Command for counterinsurgency operations so that authority will be commensurate with responsibility.

4. Set up functioning internal security councils at central, regional, provincial, and district levels along lines of models used in other countries which have conducted counterinsurgency campaigns.

5. Give Central Intelligence Organization substance, and not just shadow, of authority and control over all intelligence operations.

6. Free both Diem and Assistant Secretary of National Defense from operational functions to sufficient extent to permit them to visit scenes of ARVN victories or defeats immediately after action

[1] Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-637-71. Secret. No drafting information is given on the source text, but the paper is 1 of 11 attached to a cover sheet entitled, "Briefing Papers: Current Situation in Viet-Nam." The following papers are not printed: (1) Status of US-GVN Action Programs, (3) Geneva Accord Aspects of U.S. Military Assistance to GVN, (4) Summary of Recent Aid Levels and GVN 1962 Budgetary Problem, (5) Fact Sheet—Personnel Build-up of RVNAF, (6) Status of Preparation of a Geographically-Phased Strategic Plan for Bringing VC Subversion under Control, (7) Upgrading Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps Training Equipment, (8) Civilian Counter-Insurgency Plan, (9) Proposed Montagnard Program, (10) Unrest in North Viet-Nam: Current Manifestation and Potential, and (11) Concept of Border Control.

has occurred and to maintain more frequent informal contact with armed forces in other ways.

7. Higher and more regular pay to local officials.

II. Steps to rally mass support:

1. Increase Diem's personal contact with people through more *informal* trips to countryside, by making himself available at palace to ordinary people, either in groups or individually, by occasionally hearing mass in small church or visiting Buddhist Pagoda, et cetera.

2. Travel by Diem, wherever possible, by helicopter directly from palace in order reduce adverse reaction from closing off of streets, motorcades proceeding at high speed, behavior of security guards, et cetera.

3. Frequent, frank, and down-to-earth talks over radio (at least once a month) and on TV if system set up.

4. Use flood actions as opening gambit in campaign for *less luxury in Government* in view general emergency in which country finds itself.

5. At same time stop emphasizing "sacrifice and discipline" theme in talking to the people and tell them what they are anxious to hear—that better times are coming and that soon they will not be afraid to sleep at night.

6. In Saigon and other cities institute, visit, and dramatize labor-consuming projects for unemployed who have increased considerably as result influx into cities because of insecure conditions in countryside.

7. Initiate and publicize economic and social programs aimed at improving conditions in every village.

8. Proceed set up provincial councils which Diem has already promised publicly.

III. Steps to rally support of educated class:

1. Bring non-Communist political prisoners promptly to trial, including Dr. Dan and Pham Khac Suu.

2. Set up public tribune for free expression of ideas and criticisms as safety valve.

3. Establish political consultative council and consult this body sincerely and frequently. Council should include leading oppositionists since they are not in National Assembly.

4. Try to make it clear that National Assembly can vote freely on measures placed before it. Send back for thorough open debate measures recently adopted at Madame Nhu's instigation re taxi girls and establishment women's paramilitary force.

5. Permit opposition parties to operate and put up candidates for 1962 National Assembly elections.

6. In effort reduce criticism of family, place Nhu in ministry where he will have to accept responsibility.

IV. Armed forces:

1. Higher pay or increased family allowances to soldiers.
2. Better food.
3. Better system of promotion.

V. Social:

1. Tax reform—higher rates and collections from well-to-do.

VI. Financial:

1. A realistic military rate of exchange.

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173. Paper Prepared by the Taylor Mission [1]

Saigon, October 18, 1961.

I. Political–Social (Responsibility—Mr. Cottrell)

1. How stable is the Diem Government?

2. How can the political base for the counter-insurgency program be improved?

3. What would be the political effect of the following:

a. Introduction of SEATO and/or US forces?
b. A political settlement in Laos?
c. A major increase in US military and economic aid?

4. What are the pros and cons of a bilateral treaty?

5. What are the essential reforms to urge on Diem? What approaches to use?

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Taylor Report (Rostow Working Copy). Top Secret. There is no heading on the source text, but another copy bears the following handwritten notation on the cover sheet: "Questions Distributed by Taylor Mission for Answer by Task Force Saigon. October, 1961." (Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 68 A 5159, SGN (61) 19—GVN August through December) The questions were apparently given by the Taylor Mission to Embassy personnel at the briefing of the Taylor Mission by the Saigon Task Force on October 18.

II. Military (Responsibility—General Craig)

1. Operations and Training.

a. How is the ARVN presently disposed and how does it operate against the VC? Are present resources being used to best advantage?

b. How can the tactics and organization of ARVN be improved for combatting the VC?

c. How can the rate of increase of ARVN be accelerated? What should be the ultimate strength?

d. How can SVN forces take offensive action against the VM?

e. What can be done to combat more effectively the VC infiltration by land and sea?

f. What is the status of Special Force training? Is it adequate? Are the trained units properly used?

2. Logistics.

a. Are present logistical resources being used to best advantage?

b. What additional equipment is needed? Why? When? How much? Who operates?

c. What improvements are needed to facilities such as ports, airfields, roads and signal communications? Why? How much?

d. What can US logistical units, or US contractors do to help in logistics field? Engineers? Helicopters? CAT?

e. What prepositioning of military equipment and supplies is warranted now?

3. Intelligence.

a. What are the hard facts with regard to the VC insurgency? Tactics? Location? Routes of infiltration? Sources of supply?

b. How can the SVN intelligence system be improved? Photography?

c. What are the possibilities of organizing an effective village alarm system?

d. What are the reconnaissance capabilities? Ground? Sea? Air?

III. Political Warfare (Responsibility—Mr. Rostow)

1. What are the techniques of political warfare which can be brought to bear on the VC insurgency problem?

2. What importance is there to improving radio and TV facilities?

3. How is white and black propaganda organized? Is it effective?

4. What can be done to improve Diem's image before his own people and outside world?

IV. Unconventional Warfare (Responsibility—General Lansdale)

1. What unconventional warfare techniques should be considered in coping with VC insurgency?

2. How can we carry unconventional warfare to the enemy?

3. Are preparations adequate for waging unconventional warfare?

V. Covert Activities (Responsibility—Mr. Smith)

1. What are the covert and clandestine capabilities of SVN? Should they be increased?

2. What covert offensive actions should be considered?

3. What is being done to reduce or eliminate US participation in covert activities?

4. What are the possibilities of exploiting third country nationals in covert operations?

5. What is the extent of disaffection directed against the Diem Government?

6. What is the state of loyalty of the Armed Forces to Diem?

7. What is the true attitude of the SVN toward US?

VI. MAAG and Military Aid (Responsibility—Adm. Heinz)

1. How is the quality, size and organization of the MAAG?

2. Is the MAAG close to the RVNAF? How many are in the field? How are US advisors assigned to units?

3. Is there need for a program for further "encadrement"?

4. What is the status of organization and training of the Civil Guard and the local Security Forces?

5. How can the Secretary of Defense be kept better informed?

6. Is US military aid being used to the best advantage? Is it properly related to economic aid? Can the reaction time be reduced?

VII. Economic (Responsibility—Mr. Hoze)

1. Is there need for a revision of the economic aid program to direct it more specifically to combatting VC insurgency?

2. Is economic aid properly related to military aid?

3. What are the short-term projects of greatest promise which should be pushed forward now?

4. What economic reforms which we are justified to urge on Diem? What approaches to use?

VIII. R&D (Responsibility—Dr. Rathjens—Mr. Gold)

1. What R&D items offer promise in the short term in combatting VC insurgency? What is needed to expedite them?

2. Can the R&D organization be improved?

174. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, October 18, 1961—noon.

508. General Taylor, Rostow and Cottrell called on Diem together with local American officials for initial discussion October 18. Taylor opened by explaining reasons for his mission, its interest in all fields activity and its authority to make recommendations to President Kennedy, who will make decisions.

In response Taylor's request for description situation in Viet-Nam, Diem gave long historic account developments here. Main point which emerged concerned lack sufficient number of GVN troops. In addition insufficient armed forces he stressed need for large number well equipped and trained Civil Guard and self defense corps for protection of hamlets to prevent Viet Cong from feeding on countryside. Taylor asked whether increase armed forces could not be stepped up. Diem and Thuan replied that shortage of cadres is main bottleneck since additional officers and NCOs needed for all branches of security forces. Pointed to recent action doubling officer trainee class at Thu Duc school.

Since Diem's description underlined need for large security forces for various defensive purposes, Taylor noted that offensive warfare against guerrillas is less costly than defensive, and asked whether greater offensive action, striking at Viet Cong bases and ambushing them on infiltration trails could not be undertaken. Diem replied this being done in part but many trails not known and Viet Cong find it easy to deviate past GVN units on known trails.

Taylor asked for Diem's view on recent step-up in Viet Cong campaign. Diem said that Viet Cong aim is to induce GVN to withdraw troops from southern area (where they have been more successful in recent months) to meet greater activity in central Viet-Nam, thus again giving Viet Cong opportunity for greater initiative in southern area. Diem noted Viet Cong now often regroup into bigger units to attack more important targets but added that Viet Cong are not yet trying to engage in conventional warfare by holding on to places taken.

Taylor said he understood there had been recent discussions of introduction of American or SEATO forces into Viet-Nam and asked why change had occurred in earlier GVN attitude. Diem succinctly replied because of Laos situation. Noting it will take time to build up GVN forces he pointed to enemy's reinforcements through infil-

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 120.1551K/10-1861. Secret; Priority. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd, Bangkok, Vientiane, and Phnom Penh.

tration and increased activities in central Viet-Nam and expressed belief that enemy is trying to escalate proportionately to increase in GVN forces so that GVN will not gain advantage. He asked specifically for tactical aviation, helicopter companies, coastal patrol forces and logistic support (ground transport).

Diem indicated he thought there would be no particular adverse psychological effect internally from introducing American forces since in his view Vietnamese people regard Communist attack on Viet-Nam as international problem. Rostow inquired whether internal and external political aspects such move could be helped if it were shown clearly to world that this is international problem. Diem gave no direct comment on this suggestion. He indicated two main aspects of this problem: (1) Vietnamese people are worried about absence formal commitment by US to Viet-Nam. They fear that if situation deteriorates Viet-Nam might be abandoned by US. If troops are introduced without a formal commitment they can be withdrawn at any time and thus formal commitment is even more important in psychological sense. (2) Contingency plan should be prepared re use American forces in Viet-Nam at any time this may become necessary. In this connection Diem seemed to be talking about combat forces. While it was not completely clear what Diem has in mind at present time he seemed to be saying that he wants bilateral defense treaty and preparation of plans for use American forces (whatever is appropriate) but under questioning he did not repeat his earlier idea relayed to me by Thuan that he wanted combat forces.

Taylor several times stressed importance of overall plan—military, political, economic, psychological, etc—for dealing with guerrillas. Diem tended avoid clear response this suggestion but finally indicated that he has new strategic plan of his own. Since it was not very clear in spite efforts to draw him out what this plan is, Taylor asked him to let us have a copy in writing.

I asked Diem about significance state of emergency decree just issued (our 504 [2]). He said he took this action under conditions of Constitution and has sent it to National Assembly for approval in 30 days as required by Constitution. If Assembly approves establishment of state of emergency he said that executive decrees could then be issued. I asked whether this measure was taken because of security or flood conditions. He said both but it was evident that security considerations were uppermost since he referred to his mention of this proposed action in his October 2 National Assembly speech.

Nolting

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[2] Not printed (*Ibid.*, 751K.00/10–1861)

175. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, October 18, 1961—midnight.

507. Task Force VN.

Body of Col. Hoang Thuy Nam, Chief GVN Liaison Mission to ICC who kidnapped by VC Oct 1, recovered from Saigon River Oct 17 near bridge on northern outskirts of Saigon. Body to lie in state at GVN Liaison Mission headquarters in ICC compound beginning 1530 Oct 18. Funeral be held Oct 20. Suggest Department bring this development to attention of press. USIS sending to IPS GVN press release [2] on this subject.

. . . Oct 18 informed EmbOff as follows: GVN evening Oct 17 sent urgent letter to ICC, [3] copies of which delivered to ICC commissioners at their homes, concerning Nam case. Letter stated impossible doubt that Hanoi authorities responsible for death of Col. Nam and earnestly requested ICC within one week inform GVN of measures ICC intended take against Hanoi authorities as result this incident. Letter added GVN and Vietnamese people awaiting with greatest attention word of action to be taken.

ICC met morning Oct 18 and unanimously agreed send letter GVN expressing "deep sorrow" over death of Col. Nam and asking ICC condolences be transmitted to family. Canadians and Indians also proposed ICC send additional letter asking GVN submit further proof that DRV implicated in Viet Cong activities such as kidnapping of Col. Nam, in order permit ICC consideration of possible investigation. During discussion this proposal Indian chairman warned Poles ICC might be in for serious trouble if no action taken on Nam case. Poles requested delay in order seek instructions from Warsaw but subsequently agreed to send letter proposed by Indians and Canadians. This done afternoon Oct 18.

Comment. ICC letter, which so worded as to invite evidence of DRV connection with Viet Cong in relation allegation latter's responsibility for Nam kidnapping, represents real "breakthrough" in subversion issue. ICC bound consider information submitted in response its own request and GVN, as result earlier Jorden visit, [4] has developed useable and effective evidence which can now be exploited to fullest. . . .

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/10-1861. Confidential; Priority. Repeated to New Delhi, Ottawa, London, CINCPAC for PolAd, Geneva for FECON, Paris, Phnom Penh, Bangkok, and Vientiane.

[2] Not found.

[3] Not further identified.

[4] See Document 139.

"Time limit" for ICC action contained GVN letter unprecedented GVN tactic. GVN may have in mind using Nam case as justification for anti-insurgency actions in direct conflict with Geneva Accord.

We shall endeavor impress on GVN unprecedented opportunity presented by ICC letter and necessity exploit it.

Nolting

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176. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, October 18, 1961—9:27 p.m.

451. Ref: Deptel 192. [2] Joint State–Defense message.

1. In view factors involved in obvious breach of Geneva Accords, no firm date on introduction jets into Viet-Nam has yet been set. Any decision not to conform Accords as they pertain to jet aircraft will be made as political situation dictates at such time and to such degree as will best advance US interests. Nevertheless concur training should start now thereby enabling GVN accept jets when and if actual delivery is approved.

2. You are therefore authorized inform GVN of US offer to provide training in US to begin FY 62 for jet pilots and technicians in numbers required to operate six T–33's.

3. In discussions required for this purpose with GVN officials it should be made clear that:

(1) No public announcement be made of possible future delivery of jet aircraft pending final resolution US–GVN position on continued observance of Articles 16 and 17 Geneva Accords.

(2) That any decision to provide jets or other weapons must be made in light GVN need and ability to use them at the time. Item of most importance at present is adequate capacity of GVN to prosecute the counter-insurgency plan and to handle the immediate problem of Communist advances. Timing of jet delivery will be

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5–MSP/10–1861. Secret; Priority. Drafted by Wood, cleared with Anderson (SEA) and Defense, initialed by Wood for the Secretary, and repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Telegram 192, August 15, notified the Embassy in Saigon that the question of the introduction of jets into Vietnam was still under study in Washington and that the Embassy would be informed when a decision was made. (*Ibid.*, 751K.5–MSP/8–861)

made in context of this capacity and eventual decision regarding Geneva Accords.

Rusk

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177. Memorandum for the Record [1]

Saigon, October 19, 1961.

SUBJECT

Meeting held at Field Command Headquarters, ARVN, on Thursday, 19 October 1961 on the Occasion of the Visit of General Maxwell D. Taylor to Vietnam (the meeting was conducted in French)

ATTENDANCE

General Maxwell D. Taylor, Special Military Advisor to the President of the United States
Lieutenant General Lionel C. McGarr, Chief, MAAG, Vietnam
Major General Duong Van Minh, Commanding General, ARVN Field Command
Brigadier General Le Van Kim, Deputy Commanding General, ARVN Field Command
Colonel Thomas A. McCrary, U.S. MAAG Senior Advisor to ARVN Field Command

After an exchange of amenities, General Taylor told General Minh that his visit to ARVN Field Command was in the nature of a courtesy call and that he hoped to speak with General Minh a number of times before his departure. [2] He was sure that General Minh was aware of the reason for his trip to Vietnam—of his ambition to study the problems of the country and to help find a solution to them. Speaking as one soldier to another, he asked General Minh for his views on the guerrilla situation, how he could help to solve the problem and what General Minh's estimate of the present situation was as compared with conditions which existed two years ago. He told General Minh that he found it hard to judge

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-637-71. Secret. A note on the source text reads: "This memorandum is based on interpreter's translated, fragmentary notes, expanded from memory. It is in no sense a stenographic record of the meeting and is neither official or approved." A memorandum of a conversation on the same day between Taylor and Lieutenant General Le Van Ty, Chief of the Joint General Staff, RVNAF, is *ibid.*

[2] No record was found of any subsequent Taylor-Minh conversations during the visit.

and asked if, in the opinion of General Minh, the progress made by the communists was at a normal rate or if he felt that the tempo had increased sharply.

General Minh replied that, first of all, he considered the visit of General Taylor to be a great honor. He knew that General Taylor had spoken with all of his higher authorities and already knew much of what was happening. Speaking as a soldier, he wanted General Taylor to know that he considered the situation to be extremely grave. Not only had the Viet Cong grown alarmingly, but, worse, more and more, the Vietnamese Armed Forces were losing the support of the population. In reply to General Taylor's question as to why he felt this, General Minh said that he had known Vietnam under President Diem since 1954. The intelligence provided by the population was a guide to their attitude. In 1955 and 1956, they were full of enthusiasm and the spirit of cooperation. Now the population was giving trouble. When General Taylor asked if this was because of a loss of confidence and whether it was restricted to threatened areas, General Minh replied that the attitude prevailed in all areas—Saigon, for instance, could certainly not be considered to be a menaced area.

General Taylor then told General Minh that what he was saying was important and asked him if he had any ideas as to how confidence could be restored. Would success in war do it? General Minh replied that the government had to strive to be better understood—there should be no favorite groups or classes (he invited General Taylor to send out special teams to check). There should be no distinctions of people—either because of race or religion. Under present conditions certain religions felt that they were less favored. General Taylor asked if there was a clear division along religious lines. General Minh replied that, although he, himself, was in favor of all religions, the government conferred too many favors on one and gave nothing to others.

Another situation which General Minh thought needed correction was the system of selecting Province Chiefs. He cited his own province as an example. One Chief appointed to the province was a contractor from Hue with no administrative experience. In addition, he spoke to the people in the language of Hue and this antagonized them. After two years of no success, another young man, from the South, was selected—a young Captain, made Major for the job—whom General Minh had known earlier. In the General's opinion, it had been necessary to stretch a point to make him a Corporal. In answer to General Taylor's questions, General Minh explained that nearly all Province Chiefs were military. Most were Captains—promoted to Major for the job and promoted again to Lieutenant Colonel within two years. Their authority stemmed directly from the

President and they commanded all troops in the province except those on major operations. There were, in effect, two chains of command. General McGarr had fought hard for a single chain of command which had been agreed and which had worked—but only for several months. Now, old habits had returned. The Province Chief was always in command of the Civil Guard and of the local Self Defense Corps forces. Though the Civil Guard had been officially placed under the Ministry of Defense, they could not be touched by the military. When, acting on the guidance of General McGarr, an attempt was made to go on the offensive, it was found to be impossible to obtain the cooperation required for the establishment of security measures in areas which had been swept. There was no help from the Civil Guard. General Minh invited General Taylor to talk to General Don, Commanding General of I Corps, where the Civil Guard was organized and employed in a special way. General Minh went on to say that many things needed to be changed within the Army as well as out—morale had to be raised.

In reply to General Taylor's question as to whether the Presidential declaration of a State of National Emergency meant that all resources of the Nation would be united in the struggle against communism, General Minh shrugged, agreeing that such a united effort was necessary—that complete coordination of all elements of the government was a must—but many changes would be needed to make this a reality.

As long ago as last February, General McGarr had insisted that a National Plan to combat the insurgency was required. General McGarr added that he had been pushing for this ever since. General Minh, with the help of General Kim, had been working on a military plan which was just about completed. Only last week, according to General Kim, General Minh had requested that plans of other agencies be made available to him for comparison and coordination—he had not yet received any cooperation—and was not too confident of ever getting any.

In reply to General Taylor's question as to who in the government other than the President, was responsible for a united plan, General Minh said that he thought that the Secretary at the Presidency, Mr. Thuan, should be—but that he was faced with the same difficulties as others were.

When General Taylor told General Minh that he should not be discouraged, General Minh reminded him that he (General Taylor) had not been faced with a war problem like that in Vietnam and had been able to retire when he chose to do so. He was not completely discouraged but he was happy to have General Kim with him—they sustained each other.

In answer to General Taylor's question, he said that if he had the authority to do what he wanted to do, he would simply try to be impartial. To which, General Taylor commented that one was never intentionally unjust. General Minh smiled and said that he understood.

General Minh went on to say that, in general, the Vietnamese do not like the Communists, but some are allowed to fight them and others are not. He had fought against the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai, now these people were ready to die in the struggle against the Communists. The sects no longer existed as they were before, but it was hard to exterminate "what is in the head"—they persisted as religions. The earlier struggle against them was really a fight to exterminate a group of bandits masquerading under the name of the Hoa Hao. General Taylor suggested that the same tactics should be used against the Viet Cong.

(At this point, General Kim motioned that no further notes should be taken.)

General Minh then said that he considered himself to be a young military officer in a young army. He felt that the military needed prestige and leadership, and the assistance of superior authorities to obtain what they needed. He felt that not only was this not true—there seemed to be a desire to downgrade the military.

General Minh told General Taylor that he was happy to be able to speak to him frankly. Others would also, but only if it could be tête-à-tête or in a very small group. There was a feeling that they were on a plane in a dive, and that they would soon reach a point where it would have to be levelled off or it would be too late.

The meeting ended with General Taylor's expression of his hope to see General Minh again before his departure.

178. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State[1]

Saigon, October 20, 1961.

516. Gen. Taylor and Cottrell called on Vice President Tho October 19 accompanied by Mendenhall and me. Main points made by Vice President as follows:

1. Intelligence services function poorly because qualified personnel, equipment, and available funds spread too thinly among too many competing services. Central Intelligence Organization, which was formed at US request, not really functioning. Agreed with Taylor that adequate intelligence is of first importance in fighting guerrilla war.

2. Peasants do not support Communists politically but are forced help them because of pressure. Necessary to furnish proper protection to peasants including development protective measures at hamlet level. Stressed need for Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps, particularly latter, in sufficient number, better paid, better trained and better armed. Said that center is behind south in developing proper protective measures at village level.

Under questioning, expressed personal view that CG and SDC should have been increased rather than Armed Forces. Added current situation in central Viet-Nam requires some modification of that view but it is still valid for southern Viet-Nam. Based this on fact that guerrilla war is fought at village level thus requiring local forces who know terrain and people. Also criticized Armed Forces for being overly-developed for modern warfare rather than being able to fight in mud and water, and said greater stress should be placed on Ranger forces.

3. When questioned on Montagnard problem, said this is most difficult problem facing Viet-Nam. He said that Montagnards are excellent as intelligence agents but not good in combat.

4. Stated that in general economy has not gone too badly despite insecurity. Asserted, however, that if Commies continue advance in countryside, cities will be gradually asphyxiated through loss of peasant purchasing power and growing unemployment resulting from influx people into cities. Thus absolutely necessary to hold countryside. Added that Communists have plan to try to seize

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 120.1551K/10–2061. Secret; Priority. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd, Phnom Penh, Bangkok, and Vientiane. No time of transmission is given on the source text; the telegram was received in the Department of State at 2:12 p.m.

upcoming rice harvest and province chiefs have been asked for ideas as to how to beat Communists to punch over this crop.

5. After brief account by Vice President of tactics and techniques followed by Communists in reaching present stage of guerrilla development, Taylor asked what should be done. Vice Pres in carefully phrased reply stated that US should "intervene" quickly and intelligently. He eluded questions directed at producing specific recommendations, but did state that US has already given lots of arms and other aid and more will be coming, and what we must insist upon is that this aid be used efficiently. Pointing to Taylor's initial questions about intelligence organizations, he asserted with smile that Taylor already knew what was wrong in Viet-Nam.

Vice President added that morale of population is not bad and could easily be revived if government worked properly. People are anti-Communist and will fight but they must be convinced that what is being done is intelligently planned and executed.

6. In conclusion I raised flood conditions and Vice President said that urgent assistance already requested by GVN should arrive during first two weeks in November to produce proper impact.

Comment: It was clear that Vice Pres, when pressed for his views, was pointing his finger at Diem's methods of government and administration. He said he was not anti-Diem and expressed his support of President. But this was a plea for US to adopt a firm approach in order to make Diem and his government effective. Though lacking specifics, Vice President's appeal was both moving and disturbing in its stress on importance of time. He said six months from now would be too late.

Vice President made very good impression during talk. He showed detailed knowledge of what is going on in countryside, and had lucid ideas as to how to deal with it. He is close to people and experienced in dealing with them. Obvious, however, that he will not himself stand up to Diem and doubtful that he any longer even tries to make his voice heard by Diem.

Nolting

179. Memorandum for the Record[1]

Saigon, October 20, 1961.

SUBJECT

Minutes of Intelligence Discussion, 20 October 1961

1. General Taylor conducted a conference of intelligence matters concerning South Vietnam in Chief MAAG's office on 20 October, with following persons in attendance.

General Taylor	Mr. Colby
General McGarr	Colonel Bryant
General Timmes	Major Hyler
Dr. Rostow	Major Freestone
Mr. Cottrell	

2. Following is summary of discussion during the approximately two hour conference.

General Taylor asked for explanation of intelligence sources. Col. Bryant described how MAAG field advisors receive, translate and forward all ARVN generated intelligence reports from divisions, corps and Field Command to J2 MAAG; J2 MAAG also receives J2 RVNAF intelligence reports, estimates, studies, etc. Copies of all such reports are in turn transmitted to Army Attaché and Evaluation Center—Attaché consolidates, comments and forwards to USARPAC, PACOM and ACSI; Evaluation Center processes and produces collateral order of battle . . . . Within limited capability MAAG J2 utilizes all information received to produce current staff intelligence which is presented in form of weekly staff briefing of enemy situation and a monthly intelligence summary. General McGarr commented that MAAG not specifically charged with intelligence mission to collect information on ARVN and must be careful in this respect so as not to prejudice basic mission, however, do receive information on Viet Cong and North Vietnam from opposite numbers.

General Taylor inquired into ARVN intelligence system. Col. Bryant explained it is designed to operate same as US Army with flow from bottom to top. However, GVN also has civilian security/intelligence agencies, such as NPSS, SEPES, etc., which report information through the Province Chief and/or directly back to central

[1] Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-015-69. Top Secret. No drafting information is given on the source text, which is attached to a covering memorandum of October 27 from McGarr to Taylor in which McGarr wrote that it was MAAG's memorandum for the record and was "a summarization of the items covered during the discussion," not a verbatim account.

headquarters in Saigon without in many cases passing the information to ARVN present in the area.

General Taylor inquired as to how the system should work to provide timely intelligence. It was explained that there should be free and continuous exchange of information at all levels between ARVN battalions/regiments in provinces and the provincial administration (which receives information from civil guard, SDC, police, own intelligence net, etc). However, this is not presently done in a considerable number of instances. Mr. Colby commented that province chief has civil guard, NPSS, own net, etc. reporting information to provincial headquarters and which province chief often uses solely in his own security operations, or reports to GVN in Saigon without disseminating to ARVN in the area. It was explained that intelligence for ARVN military operations comes from ARVN combat intelligence efforts plus that which may or may not be obtained from province administration sources.

Mr. Colby explained the seven intelligence agencies (in contrast to US five) and stated are numerous as President believes intelligence is "power" and through such organizations President is able to control, and by not centralizing them under a subordinate he avoids giving that power to someone who might use it against the President. Agencies are the ARVN intelligence, military security service (controlled by President and not ARVN), NPSS (National Police and Security Service), SEPES (Service for Social and Political Studies), Presidential Liaison Service (a private security service), and the recently organized Central Intelligence Organization which was organized at urging of US in order to pull *all* intelligence information together centrally, as is not now the case, where it can be collated, processed, and disseminated to users. CIO is having hard time in getting off the ground—lack of full Presidential support, and some other intelligence agencies. General McGarr stressed the great need for timely dissemination of all available intelligence to the military for effective conduct of operations.

Capability of MAAG advisors to collect and report enemy information and activity was discussed, and was explained that under present set up advisors are unable to do little other than collect enemy information from ARVN and forward up. This is because enemy activity is so numerous and widespread and advisors are seldom present on the actual scene of action.

General Taylor commented that reports received in Washington build up large red blots on the map which continue to accumulate as no subsequent information received to up-date situation allowing some units to be removed perhaps, and this possibly gives a misleading and scaring picture back in Washington. Mr. Colby com-

mented that very possible the red blots do not build up as fast as the Viet Cong actually are building.

General Taylor, Mr. Colby, and Major Hyler discussed Viet Cong strengths compiled by Evaluation Center based on compilation of collateral order of battle and special intelligence information (information furnished General Taylor in separate report [2] and not repeated here). General Taylor stated all reports going to Washington should report VC battalion strengths (or estimates), otherwise present false picture to those who think of battalions as 800–1000 man units. Growth of VC military was discussed and explained that available information indicates armed strength in Delta area has not increased greatly, however, a consolidation and regularizing of forces into regular battalions has taken place. The significant increase has been in the 1st and 2nd Corps areas and indications are this has been accomplished largely by infiltration.

The figure of 200,000 Vietnamese being available to Viet Cong, as stated in GVN Aide-Mémoire [3] was discussed. It was explained this figure result of RVNAF J2 study based on information from the provinces as to number of villages controlled, or heavily infiltrated by VC (cy of J2 report [4] available if desired).

Dr. Rostow queried as to order of battle picture at various echelons of ARVN and provincial administration levels. It was explained that province chief normally presents a neat picture of VC situation, but impossible for US personnel to evaluate accuracy. Also, in ARVN, the lower one goes in the units, the worse the situation becomes—in the past RVNAF J2 and Field Command G2 have been quite conservative from a quantity standpoint compared to subordinate divisions and slower in accepting new VC units and strengths. Dr. Rostow asked about interrogation of prisoners. Was explained that US does not participate in this activity, however, we supposedly receive results of interrogations if anything of value is revealed. Prisoners captured by ARVN are normally interrogated at division level then turned over to provincial authorities for trial, rehabilitation, etc. Mr. Colby commented on lack of cooperation in this and other intelligence matters from the NPSS due to antipathy

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[2] Apparently a reference to eight pages of outline notes, dated October 20, entitled "McGarr Briefing for Gen. Taylor." Among the subjects covered in the notes were the terrain and climate in Vietnam, Viet Cong strength, RVNAF casualties and strength, actions which improve the situation in Vietnam, and actions the United States might take. Under this last heading, McGarr said the United States might "employ US combat troops to fight Viet Cong," but they should not "come in at all unless in sufficient strength to tip the balance." The minimum force recommended by McGarr was two full divisions, "suitably reinforced and supported with helicopters, engineers, etc." (*Ibid.*, T-637-71)

[3] Not further identified.

[4] Not found.

towards Americans of NPSS Chief, Brig Gen La—presently OSA only receives, above board, a monthly roundup report from NPSS, . . . General McGarr briefly commented on how VC prisoners generally handled in attempt to rehabilitate them. General Taylor stated that POWs should be interrogated to provide evidence of link from NVN in order to make a case for the ICC. Mr. Colby commented that it can be proved that VC went North in 1954–55, trained there and returned to the South.

General Taylor brought up fact of VC build up in SVN and apparent little increase in Delta area as opposed to Northern 1st and 2nd Corps area. Mr. Colby and others commented that appears Nambo (Delta area) concentrated on organizing a regular force structure from numerous platoon and skeleton-type units with little increase, relatively speaking, in overall *military* strengths, whereas, Northern area (1st and 2nd Corps) has seen a significant increase in military elements since Fall of 1960. Mr. Colby commented that it is apparent the VC opened up a second front of activity, so to speak, in the Northern Highland and Coastal areas due to considerable GVN success in suppressing activity in the South.

General Taylor brought up subject of casualties both sides. Col Bryant stated we have no confidence in reports received from ARVN on their own casualties, but there are indications that ARVN is becoming more reliable in reporting VC casualties, although still believed to be inflated considerably in specific instances. General Taylor wondered about the large VC casualty statistics commenting it might indicate low quality of recruits. Mr. Colby pointed out that casualties also include any innocent local people who may not have actually been connected with VC, or were at least passive—concluding that a dead Vietnamese is always considered a VC by ARVN if killed in area of action. Dr. Rostow queried if study of casualties versus incident rate had been made—answer was no due to unreliability of statistics which would be used (MAAG judges that all statistics are only relative and do not show the complete picture. For example, a considerable amount of VC activity in areas heavily infiltrated or dominated by VC is never reported as there are no friendly sources to report.)

Types of VC (recruited in South, infiltrated, etc) discussed. General consensus that some 70 percent are recruited and trained in the South, approximately 25 percent are regrouped Southerners sent to North after war end (or later), trained, and infiltrated back to South, with some 5 percent probably originating from the North and sent here as political and military cadre.

General Taylor asked if US has capability to interrogate VC prisoners—answer was no due to language barrier, and must use

Vietnamese Nationals. This is probably exploitable field as VC prisoners have not been systematically interrogated in past.

General Taylor asked for fundamental facts as to intelligence production by US in country, appears no one charged with nor staffed to do this, all agencies are collectors and reporters. Major Hyler described Evaluation Center operation and fact that MAAG, ARMA, OSA, etc, funnelled information into the Center. General Taylor asked for mission of EC and this furnished by Major Hyler, and which General Taylor read.[5] It was explained that General McGarr got the Center going to assist in supplying hard targets to ARVN based on special intelligence and concealed as to source of information by use of collateral. The Center reports through SSO to ACSI and Task Force. Product of Center collateral order of battle effort made available to in-country and all US agencies. General Taylor posed question as to what should be done to provide efficient in-country intelligence apparatus for collection, processing, and dissemination of accurate, timely intelligence. Giving MAAG intelligence production capability, bringing in a team from USARPAC, straightening out GVN intelligence processes, were discussed. Mr. Colby stated that OSA has started on GVN but President does not want his intelligence funnelled through one person or agency. MAAG has and is exerting similar efforts in the military field to get MSS (counterintel effort) under the army where it belongs, organize an FOI capability, and train intelligence specialists. General McGarr stated that if US units came in we would want to control intelligence or at least have a strong hand in the effort. General Taylor asked for best way to set up a US intelligence production effort or agency. Col. Bryant expressed belief that Evaluation Center should be expanded. Dr. Rostow commented that first we need personnel to work on the raw material, and that G2 or intelligence activities must work closely with G3 or combat operations. It was also generally agreed that US intelligence effort, however organized, should include an organization to work hand in glove with ARVN intelligence producers to assure the effort is properly conducted, we receive all available information, and to gain benefit of being able to exchange ideas and rapidly clear up questions of doubt concerning translations, etc.

The discussion turned to plans for sealing the border in which General McGarr explained current ARVN plans of consolidating numerous isolated small posts into several large defendable border bases from which ARVN would conduct interlocking patrols, etc. General McGarr mentioned present capability of VC to infiltrate at will through many border points where there are no friendly units.

[5] Not further identified.

General Taylor asked if important VC groups had been discovered or ambushed coming in from Laos. Mr. Colby stated yes and described several instances, all of which are included in GVN Aide-Mémoire with supporting documentary evidence. Dr. Rostow posed question that if US should consider bringing infiltration question up in UN where should UN observers be stationed to detect infiltration. General consensus was that border is like a sieve and a half-dozen or so locations could not effectively detect infiltration along the numerous jungle trails. General Taylor finished reading EC mission, and stated that the US wants to and must know how the war is going from all aspects, and that although EC mission is important, it does not go far enough.

The conference was concluded with General Taylor stating it had been most profitable. However, problem remains as how to institute effective intelligence system for both GVN in countering the VC threat and US in order to be knowledgeable on the overall situation—both GVN and Viet Cong.

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180. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, October 20, 1961—midnight.

520. We are struck by opportunity afforded by severe flood in Delta to undertake with GVN fast public demonstration of unity of purpose and action. We intend to conduct right away further survey of flooded regions related to following possibilities:

A. Restoration of four provinces to permanent GVN control, based on improved physical and social conditions and improved security arrangements.

B. Feasibility of using flood relief operation as means of introducing into SVN US military units for humanitarian purposes, which might be kept if necessary.

C. Demonstration of US concern and action on behalf of ally in non-military field by using military equipment and personnel (engineer battalions, boats, equipment, etc.) with important ICC and world opinion angle.

D. Publicity at time when much press attention focused this area.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 851K.49/10-2061. Secret. Also sent to CINCPAC for action and repeated to Phnom Penh.

E. Joint planning and operation with GVN which may point way to similar closer cooperation in other spheres.

Will submit further recommendations after survey. Purpose this message to give idea our preliminary thinking, in view shortness of time available for follow-through (approx two weeks) in event survey validates idea.

Nolting

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181. Letter From the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (McConaughy) to the Ambassador in Vietnam (Nolting) [1]

Washington, October 20, 1961.

DEAR FRITZ: In view of the recent rumors about changes at the Palace . . . I thought it might be useful to bring up to date the memo entitled "Suggested Contingency Plan" which John Steeves sent to Durby under cover of his letter of April 13, 1961. [2]

The present memorandum is intended to replace the earlier one so that you will only have one file for easy (and possibly urgent) reference. Naturally the suggestions which follow are subject to your comment which we would very much value.

I would like to take this opportunity to tell you how pleased we are by the sensible, steady and conscientious embassy which you are carrying on in Saigon under the most difficult circumstances. I think the quality of steadiness is particularly important in our relations with the Vietnamese at this time.

Please convey my greetings to your staff and their families. I am very proud of them all. If there are any personal or professional problems on which we can be of assistance please be sure to let us know.

Very sincerely,

Walter

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 68 A 5159, New Command Arrangements 1962. Top Secret; Official–Informal. A handwritten note in the top margin reads: "Rec'd 11/2/61."

[2] Neither Steeves' letter nor the memorandum has been found.

PS—Some of the statements in the enclosed memorandum will be obvious to you, but will provide clarification to high level persons in Washington who may wish to read it.

[Enclosure]

Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State [3]

Washington, October 20, 1961.

SUGGESTED CONTINGENCY PLAN

The knowledge of the existence of this memorandum is to be restricted to the smallest possible number of persons. It is not an Instruction. It is designed for reference by the Chief of Mission, but is not binding on him.

It is suggested that it be kept available and that it be reviewed with the Department whenever considered necessary by the Chief of Mission either through official informal correspondence with the Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs or by telegram if necessary.

The United States continues to give President Diem full support by every appropriate means. For so long as Diem exercises effective control over the GVN, the US should take no action, overt or covert, which would give any encouragement to his opponents. During a possible coup the American Embassy should continue to support Diem fully until a decision is reached by the Chief of Mission that the time for change has arrived. [4]

If in the best judgment of the Chief of Mission the situation arises where Diem has lost effective control, the United States should be prepared to quickly support the non-Communist person or group who then appears most capable of establishing effective control over the GVN. The nature of US support in such a situation should be strong enough to achieve rapid results but not so blatant as to make such a person or group appear as a US puppet. This will require the most careful handling.

While the final choice should not be frozen in advance, since it is impossible to foresee a situation which may arise, it is believed it would be wise if the Embassy prepared and kept current through

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[3] Top Secret; Limit Distribution. No drafting or clearance information is given on the source text.

[4] Several marginal notes, apparently in Mendenhall's hand, are on the source text. Alongside this sentence is written a question mark.

regular consultation with the Department a list of persons and groups who might be acceptable. This might save priceless time in the event of a crisis and reduce the chances of mistakes or vacillation. Preliminary views follow:

1. The choice should be limited to persons in Viet-Nam on the grounds that they would be the only ones who would have any chance of rallying support in the face of the probability that the Communists would move fast. [5]

2. The first priority should go to civilians within the Government with emphasis on US backing for a constitutional solution. Before abandoning Diem every effort should be made to consider how he might be reestablished even if he appeared temporarily to have lost control. [6]

3. If the Chief of Mission should decide that Diem had lost control, the first decision would be whether to support Vice President Tho as the constitutional successor. A recent Embassy telegram (Embtel 516 dated October 20 [7]) describes him as lucid, having detailed knowledge and as being close to the people. It would be necessary to persuade Tho and persuade the military to support him. This might be achieved through General Duong van Minh who is an old friend of Tho's (they were cellmates in a French jail about 1946) and who is well thought of in the army. It would be important to hold off the President's family. It might be well for Nhu to take a trip.

4. Failing Tho, a second choice might be Nguyen dinh Thuan who is increasingly widely known as a result of the extensive representation which he does for Diem and who has preserved good relations with the Vietnamese military dating back to his days as a civilian official in the Vietnamese Department of Defense. [8] Both Thuan and Tho are capable men, experienced in the Vietnamese Government and friendly to Americans. Although Thuan is not in the constitutional line of succession, this would probably not be a major problem in the present crisis situation.

5. Constitutionally, if Tho did not take office, President of the National Assembly Truong vinh Le would be next in line (Article 34) and would, according to the Constitution, preside for two months pending elections. He is dedicated, but has little public appeal and does not seem capable of firm imaginative leadership. At best he would be a temporary figurehead needing strong military support and a competent cabinet.

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[5] Alongside this sentence is written "Buu Hoi?"

[6] Alongside this paragraph are written two question marks.

[7] Document 178.

[8] Written in the margin next to this sentence are the following comments: "without political support & has made too many enemies."

6. Other possible civilian candidates within the Government might be Bui van Long, Secretary of the Interior, Vo van Hai, the President's Chief of Cabinet or Tran van Dinh if he were in Viet Nam (he is now at the Vietnamese Embassy in Washington).

7. Another possibility which might be preferable paragraphs 5 and 6 would be a military caretaker government under General Duong van Minh. [9]

8. The strength of the Communist challenge in Viet Nam would appear to rule out a Government of anti-Communist oppositionists. These men are disunited, inexperienced and do not have a wide following. It would seem almost impossible for them to organize an effective Government before the Communists took over.

Giving U.S. support to men now in the Vietnamese Government would reduce the risks of a dangerous interregnum and would probably be acceptable to most influential Vietnamese who do not appear to object so much to their present Government as to Diem's alleged inability to lead it effectively. [10]

9. It would also seem best to rule out any possibility of a Government under Diem's unpopular brothers, even if Luyen were front man. However, it might be wise to suggest that Brother Ngo dinh Can be left temporarily in control of his satrapy at Hue.

10. Meanwhile we face the very difficult problem of Diem's leadership. Most of those close to him do not now appear to think he is sufficiently effective. Diem seems unwilling to listen to advice on this subject. The U.S. is committed to support the Government of Viet-Nam of which Diem is President. It should be assumed that any U.S. initiative to remove Diem would become known and would be resisted ferociously by Diem and his family. But if it is clear that he can no longer obtain the effective collaboration of the members of his own government, we shall have to consider what we should and can do. We presume you will have discussed this with General Taylor and that he will have your views. We will discuss this with him when he returns. In the meanwhile, in view of the reported decrease in support which Diem seems to be receiving even from his closest advisers, we would appreciate your thoughts in this regard by cable.

The best U.S. approach would thus appear to be to support Diem so long as the Chief of Mission believes his control is effective and to use our influence with him to make it more effective. In this connection the Embassy might propose a draft of a letter from

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[9] Written in the margin alongside this sentence are the following comments: "Or under Kim. Might also be preferable to any of foregoing choices."

[10] Written in the margin alongside this sentence are the following comments: "Why not consider possibilities of Tran qui Buu, or Lt. Col. Thao, or perhaps even Maitre Dru?"

President Kennedy to President Diem based on General Taylor's recommendations. Such a draft could state that in the interest of the defense of Viet-Nam and of our heavy commitment there the U.S. considers it essential for President Diem to create an effective Internal Security Council with real executive responsibilities headed by a person of stature who would be loyal to Diem and respected by his colleagues. All government business would have to pass through the Internal Security Council. We should also request him to confirm to us the name of his successor. Other recommendations could include a real unification of intelligence functions. To obtain Diem's real concurrence it would have to be made clear that these moves were essential parts of the Counterinsurgency Plan which Diem agreed to carry out. It would also have to be implied quite understandably that if he did not, we would have to reconsider our policy towards Viet-Nam. Such a letter would require a prior decision that we would be prepared if necessary to run the risk of suddenly withdrawing our support from Diem and of almost simultaneously throwing our weight behind the most likely replacement. Such a move would require preparation, secrecy, surprise, and toughness.

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182. Memorandum From the Secretary of Defense's Deputy Assistant for Special Operations (Lansdale) to the President's Military Representative (Taylor) [1]

Saigon, October 21, 1961.

SUBJECT

Talk with Nhu, 19 October

Ngo Dinh Nhu invited me to visit him the morning of 19 October. I did so, ... met Nhu in his office in Freedom Palace.

The substance of Nhu's remarks were:

The events in Laos have given a psychological shock to anti-Communists in Asia. The governments of Thailand, Vietnam, Formosa, Korea, and the Philippines have expressed disapproval of events in Laos, on a government level. This may give the impression that it is only the governments which are concerned, and not public

[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878, Vietnam—Taylor. Secret. Copies were sent to Nolting and Rostow. The source text is apparently Nolting's copy.

opinion. Just the opposite is true. The Asian man-in-the-street is profoundly affected.

For example, in South Vietnam the Communist guerrillas now present themselves in the villages as having just come from the successful Communist forces in Laos. This is not true, of course, but it is very effective psy war on the Vietnamese villagers.

The shock of Laos does not seem to be understood in the West. The West apparently looks upon this as governmental actions to blow up the Laos situation for their own ends. However, to the citizens in Asian countries, the events in Laos mean the end of SEATO and that the U.S. is now ready to abandon all anti-Communists. Therefore, the Asians are becoming demoralized.

The biggest weak point of the U.S. is the lack of psychological action on the world. There seems to be no unity of theme or action. The important thing is to make the people know what the U.S. wants. For example, during a visit to Morocco this summer, I noted an almost complete absence of U.S. propaganda. The journalists in Rabat asked about the meeting of the neutralists in Belgrade. After giving them some frank opinions on the neutralists, the journalists commented: "You have shown us the other side of the moon."

The Free World, including the Government of Vietnam, is working against Communism in an administrative fashion. This way of working doesn't create a movement of opinion. Without a movement of opinion, there can be no quick action. The Government of Vietnam is incapable of creating a great movement, even though it is doing many things.

Western propaganda against Communism doesn't exist. Western journalism often attacks the West and puts the West in the wrong. That's why people here were awaiting General Taylor's visit, to create a psychological shock both in South Vietnam and in North Vietnam. The visit is very important from the psychological standpoint.

Public opinion in Vietnam has it that General Taylor's mission has the power of decision, which I realize is not true. That's why I think there should be something in the communiqué about a decision. Perhaps the statement could be in the form of saying: "Something needs doing in Vietnam, but I am not saying just what right now. I am going back to Washington, where the decision will be made." (*Comment:* It was suggested that Nhu might touch on this topic when he talks with Dr. Rostow, which he intends to do.[2] Nhu agreed.)

The Communists make use of human capital to wage their subversive war. They can do all sorts of things with this human

[2] No record of a conversation between Nhu and Rostow was found.

capital, such as terrorism and blackmail. After the Geneva Agreement in 1954, the Communists regrouped people for later efforts. 60,000 were readied for Cochin China, 40,000 for Central Vietnam and the High Plateau, and 35,000 for Cambodia. 10,000 of the people for Cambodia were Cambodians taken to the North from Cambodia itself.

The key point in Communist doctrine is the belief in eventual victory. It is essential. You don't find this in the Free World. Everybody seems paralyzed by the prospect of Communist victory. Therefore, we have the serious problem of stopping this decomposition. Since 1945, the Free World has been thinking that it can defeat the Communists by strategic solutions. We want to fight the Communists by victory. This is exactly as though we were to say, "In order to win the war, you need victory." People think this is easy and this is the Western point of view.

In the Western world, we have the human capital of freedom. This is something that everybody has. So, this is not only the capital, but it also can be the motive for action. So, the equation is made: "To win the war, you must have liberty."

In countries not yet free, if you apply this equation to them, you are going to be beaten: "To be a developed country, don't be underdeveloped. You must not let yourself be attacked by the Communists. If you are attacked, you are guilty." It is felt that liberty exists without economics. Socialism has attacked capitalism on this very point.

Normally, when a house starts burning down, people help and call the firemen. Now this has changed. If your house burns down, you are somehow guilty. Those who come to aid you are somehow guilty, too. That's the history of Laos, and of other Asian countries. The Laotians feel they are guilty. Why did they provoke the Communists by wanting to be independent? Because they wanted to choose their own friends in the West freely, they were attacked by the Communists.

Now the Laotians who sought liberty are being called corrupt. Phoumi and Boun Oum are labelled "reactionaries". Souvanna Phouma and Kong Le are labelled "pure". Nobody says that Souvanna Phouma holds lots of economic resources, that the bank and the airline are his. Not a single reporter in the Free World seems to want to talk about that. Nobody points out that Kong Le has several wives and a Chinese concubine. At the same time, Western reporters say that Diem, Phoumi, and so on, are corrupt. Why? Because they were attacked by the Communists. So, in some way, they are guilty and all that is needed is to look for the details of guilt.

Until now, Cambodia has been fine. However, Cambodia wouldn't be looked upon so favorably if it were realized that it can

be taken over by the Communists in 48 hours. Actually, Cambodia is not strong, is not to be counted upon.

Apparently, the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh reported to Washington a few months ago that there were no Communist concentrations in Laos, that any reports to this effect were Vietnamese inventions aimed at getting increased U.S. aid for South Vietnam.[3] Word of this report seeped from the French military experts in Cambodia who claimed to have collaborated in the American report. This is the kind of false information which doesn't inform Washington properly.

In hearing of this report, the Vietnamese then asked Washington for aerial reconnaissance of the Cambodian frontier.[3] This request was mainly in order to be certain that Washington had the correct information. The Cambodian frontier is truly fantastic as far as Communist military camps go. The Vietnamese have little capability for professional aerial reconnaissance. The Americans can do it so much better themselves.

In order to believe a report that there are no Communists in Cambodia, you would have to believe that the Communists have given up guerrilla warfare. Everybody knows that one of the cardinal principles of guerrilla warfare is to have bases on a border. Essentially, if the Communists gave up this principle, they would have to give up Communism. Communism which doesn't expand isn't Communism.

The Communists in South Vietnam are waging war in a brutal fashion. They rely heavily on terror. They are applying military doctrine, not Mao Tse Tung's doctrine.

The present Communist doctrine in South Vietnam appears to be: the sum of tactical victories establishes a favorable strategic situation. The tactical actions are not political, but lead towards the hope of victory. This puts the population off balance, without time enough to organize itself for defense.

There is much lack of unity in Communist forces in South Vietnam. Some of the Communist cadre are not in agreement with Hanoi's policy of terror. But, they can't get out of it. They are too enmashed in the gears of Communism. Mostly, these are the people who were in the 1945–1954 war. During that war, they were favored by the population, which loved them. Now, due to the terror campaign, they are feared and hated. Many of the prisoners, and the Communists who defect, have told this.

We Vietnamese are not applying the same doctrine of the sum of tactical victories. We are looking for decisive battles. This is a real

[3] Not further identified.

mistake. We must increase the number of ambushes of the Viet Cong, the tactical victories.

At a recent meeting in Ban Me Thuot, with local civilian and military officials, we went over details of the local problem. Frankly, they were not really waging war against the Communists there, either in civic or military action. The main reason was the old one of a lack in Asians of using systematic procedures. The Communists apply a Germanic system, in a very methodical manner. Communism is a Western movement, applying method and a thorough follow-through which really is quite foreign to Asians.

The Vietnamese is intelligent, but lacks the methodical spirit. Each takes action, but not systematically. If things don't work, they feel the reason must be elsewhere. In the two recent reverses in the High Plateau, garrisons were swept away and the troops coming to their relief were ambushed. The local officials admitted that they had previous information of possible attack, but that the commanders and troops involved were not vigilant enough. How does it happen then that nobody has learned the lesson? It is because orders were poorly given. (*Comment:* Nhu then explained the new orders that were to be given. Troops going to the relief of an attacked garrison are to have the primary mission of liquidating the Viet Cong ambush on the line of march. Otherwise, the commander will just rush his troops to the beleagured garrison in single file, be ambushed, and never get there. Thus, the new orders will be: don't say go to the rescue, but give the mission as annihilate the ambush. By provoking ambushes, you can retain the initiative. This can be called "drawing the tiger out of the forest".)

The military always say, "we don't have intelligence", to excuse inaction. But, with the present system, there is exploitable information. Admittedly, there is a need for more organization. (*Comment:* Here I interposed a question about the Central Intelligence Organization. I said that the Americans wanted the Vietnamese to win, that we had really counted on Nhu himself to act strongly on getting this CIO started dynamically and meaningfully. From various reports, this seemed to be going slowly.)

People put the problem the wrong way. The Intelligence cadres on the higher levels have not been trained. The Americans have been helping, but they trained the lower-level cadres, in large numbers. Not the chiefs, though. In the old days, the French directed everything from the top. Now, the Americans have promised to train the chiefs. But, the chiefs have not been trained, and without trained chiefs, there is nobody to direct the effort.

This is an example of accusing an underdeveloped country of being underdeveloped. I am accused of many things. Probably the accusations are correct, because I have to substitute for ministers in a

lot of matters. The communists say that I take care of everything, probably so that I'll be paralyzed by the fear of being criticized. But, then, people say that I am responsible for the bad things, never the good things. I'm afraid that I've let myself become paralyzed by the fear of criticism.

(*Comment:* The meeting was breaking up. I reassured him firmly that we wanted Vietnam to win and that we were counting on his personal help strongly.)

Edward G. Lansdale [4]

[4] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

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183. Editorial Note

On October 21, Maxwell Taylor and some members of his mission, accompanied by representatives of the Military Assistance Advisory Group, Embassy staff, and Vietnamese officials, left Saigon for a 2-day tour of the countryside. In his memoirs, Taylor wrote that one of the days was spent in the north near the demilitarized zone and the other flying over the Mekong Delta. (Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares*, page 239) Although there are passing references to this trip in other documents in this chapter, no other documentation on the trip has been found.

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184. Draft Paper Prepared by the Political Counselor of the Embassy in Vietnam (Mendenhall) [1]

Saigon, October 22, 1961.

HOW STABLE IS THE DIEM GOVERNMENT?

It is less stable than it was six or three months ago or even than it was a week ago. Major Viet Cong incidents in September and

[1] Source: Department of State, Vietnam Working Group Files: Lot 66 D 193, Coup Rumors GVN 1961. Secret.

October indicating serious deterioration of security in Central Viet-Nam and the provinces north of Saigon have revived in increasingly acute form long-standing dissatisfaction with Diem's lack of efficient organization and failure to rally broad political support among the masses and the educated class. The greatly increased infiltration of regular VC units through Laos and the horrible death inflicted by the VC on Colonel Nam have produced an atmosphere bordering on panic in Saigon.

Diem's tenacious holding power may enable him to weather this crisis just as he has survived numerous others. Three political alternatives appear possible: a) a palace revolution of sorts; b) a military coup; or c) Communist overthrow of the government. Chances of either of the first two are about 50–50 as against Diem's continuing essentially unchanged. Direct Communist overthrow seems unlikely during the next few months at least since the Communists do not yet have the military power for this purpose.

The palace revolution apparently now under discussion by senior GVN officials would aim at greater efficiency in government operations and broader national unity through increased use of mild anti-Communist oppositionists. Diem's role would apparently be restricted to policy questions, and execution would be left to an emergency council. The group considering this has no clear idea as to how to achieve its aim. This plan might well improve government organization and somewhat broaden political support.

Only the military has the power to carry out a coup aimed at removing Diem from power. The possibility of such a coup is proportionate to the degree of success or failure in the war with Viet Cong, which in turn depends on proper governmental organization and extent of political support for the government. Coup mutterings are on the rise because of the recent deterioration in security.

A major risk in any non-Communist coup attempt is that the Communists would profit from the attendant confusion either to extend their hold in the countryside to major towns or even to succeed in taking over the government. Communist takeover of the government might be indirectly through a weak coalition or possibly (though this is unlikely) by seizing power and setting up a Communist government. There is greater danger from this at present than from direct frontal Commie overthrow of the Diem government since they still lack adequate forces and weapons for direct assault.

185. Memorandum From the Secretary of Defense's Deputy Assistant for Special Operations (Lansdale) to the President's Military Representative (Taylor) [1]

[Saigon, October 23, 1961.]

SUBJECT

Unconventional Warfare

Here are answers to the first of three questions [2] you posed to me on the above subject.

1. What unconventional warfare techniques should be considered in coping with the VC insurgency?

Perhaps the truest thing that could be said about the situation in Vietnam today is that the accomplishments do not match the efforts that are being made. In reviewing programs and plans, I was struck by the wealth of ideas, abilities, and equipment which the U.S. has put into Vietnam. Yet, the Vietnamese governmental machinery seems to be bogged down, and somehow things simply don't get done effectively enough. This might well remain true despite our sending in more people, new types of weapons, or changing organizational structures. Thus, just adding more of many things, as we are doing at present, doesn't appear to provide the answer that we are seeking.

I suspect that too many of the people we are counting upon to get things done are frustrated by red tape or by lack of real understanding of the problems confronting them, with the result that they simply go through the motions of their work like puppets. Mistrust, jealousy, and self-seeking compound the error. Yet, the Vietnamese are an able and energetic people. They don't seem to be themselves today. They are going to lose their country if some spark doesn't make them catch fire to go to work to win this war.

The spark could well be to place the right Americans into the right areas of the Vietnamese government to provide *operational* guidance. These Americans should be *collaborators*, who quietly advise some key Vietnamese leaders on how to get things moving effectively, and are physically close enough to them to permit the guidance to be constant. Such work will require Americans of talent and compassion, who will engage in the task with considerable empathy. Perhaps the wisest method of selecting them would be to let each

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 63 A 1803, Vietnam—Taylor Group. Top Secret.

[2] See Document 173.

Vietnamese name the American he would like as an advisor; then the U.S. should go to work to make those people available. There have been close friendships between some Americans and some Vietnamese, with the Vietnamese responding warmly to the help of a friend while blandly circumventing the advice of an expert who wasn't a friend. Likely, some of the Americans now in Vietnam would be named.

This concept does not envision a large group of Americans moving into the whole Vietnamese governmental structure. It is intended only for key spots in the Vietnamese government, where decisive action will pay off the most. Selected cabinet officers and a few Directors in some bureaus should have such American advisors. The list of key posts, where decisive action is needed to make the difference between winning and losing, should be made by the U.S. Ambassador.

The introduction of American operational advisors into key points of the Vietnamese government, of course, can only be done with the help of President Diem. He might find the idea attractive for several reasons. It would help stabilize the political situation and cut down the feelings for a coup. It would make his own decisions be more effective; when he wants something done, there will be an American quietly seeing to it that there is some real follow-through.

On the U.S. side, this group of Americans should be looked upon as a team, structured for guidance under the Chief of Mission. While there would be continual cooperation with U.S. organizations in Vietnam, the team would work more effectively if it looked upon itself as a team. Personnel would come from various U.S. organizations, which would have to transfer them to Vietnam. The team should have a small staff for administrative support. If the fiscal support of the team poses unworkable problems, perhaps Presidential contingency funds would provide the solution.

I believe that one year of devoted duty by such Americans would spark a complete psychological change in Vietnam's situation, give the Vietnamese the hope of winning, and take the initiative away from the Communists, as long as we sustain all U.S. activities at the current accelerated pace. The constant, constructive help of these advisors will upgrade the effectiveness of the whole U.S. assistance program.

At the same time, all U.S. organizations in Vietnam should move into the field of operational advice, doing so as helpers, not as orderers. Secretary Thuan's idea of a Combined VN-US Military

Board is a good example.[3] The positioning of the 4400th CCTS (Jungle Jim) unit right in with the Vietnamese Air Force to help give operational guidance is another example. Most of the covert operations offer further examples. Much more of this should be done, until the Vietnamese get the feeling of real alliance with the U.S. and the Americans themselves become personally involved in having the Vietnamese win the war.

Also at the same time, the U.S. officials in Vietnam should be freed of as much of the present burden of red tape as possible. Entirely too much time and energy is being devoted to responding to the demands for information, accounting for actions, overplanning, and opinions, particularly from Washington organizations. Some of this is essential. If the paper work could be reduced to the bare essentials, this should release much time and energy towards working more on winning the war in Vietnam. Perhaps a practical device would be in having the Washington Task Force visit Vietnam frequently enough to keep up with the situation. The Task Force members know their way around Vietnam well enough so that their visits need impose only a minimum extra effort on U.S. organizations in Vietnam.

There are numerous projects in the field of psychological warfare, civic action, and special operations which are being done now or are being developed, which I have discussed with the U.S. personnel responsible. There are many imaginative operations. I believe that one which might require an assist from you in Washington would be the TV proposal from USOM.[4]

A second project is one with which General Milton is concerned, the 4400th CCTS (Jungle Jim). Serious thought should be given to making this a *combat* force rather than an *advisory* group. If done overtly, it could become part of the token U.S. force requested by President Diem. However, it could be much more effective in accomplishing U.S. objectives if we were to free it into becoming the covert unit for which it was also designed. Personnel and aircraft could operate under cover of the VIAT. The unit could then undertake counter-guerrilla operations inside Vietnam, as well as support the 77th Tactics Brigade (the 1st Observation Group) in operations in Laos and North Vietnam. Its introduction *now*, even as an advisory group, is needed. A change in mission later could be done right in Vietnam.

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[3] Lansdale discussed this idea with Thuan on October 20 and related the conversation to Taylor in a memorandum of October 21. (Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 63 A 1803, Vietnam—Taylor Group)

[4] Apparently a reference to the proposal described in Document 166.

186. Memorandum From the Secretary of Defense's Deputy Assistant for Special Operations (Lansdale) to the President's Military Representative (Taylor) [1]

Saigon, October 23, 1961.

SUBJECT

Unconventional Warfare

This is in answer to the second question you posed to me. [2]

2. How can we carry unconventional warfare to the enemy?

Current plans for action against North Vietnam appear to be about as extensive as can be made under present U.S. policy. Better intelligence should start providing a further selection of targets for destruction and sabotage, but it is going to take a long time and a lot of hard preparatory work before the Vietnamese can do more than harassment activities in North Vietnam. The new 20 kw radio transmitter at Hue should be of some help when it goes into operation, but it will be a weak voice compared to Radio Hanoi. (Lawrence at USOM states that it is 135 kw.)

Some economic warfare should be given serious consideration, to develop unrest in the population. If debasing the currency is not feasible, then measures should be taken to slow up the economy. One such measure might be the seeding of the Red River with a variety of water lily that really clogs up waterways and can make navigation almost impossible without extensive and continuous clearing operations. If seeded near the dams in the upper areas, this should have the blight gradually move down stream and eventually hamper the shipment of rice from the delta region. Rice production in the Red River Delta is critical to the economy of North Vietnam. It now depends mostly on waterways for its transport.

Consideration should be given to a longer-range policy towards North Vietnam. If the Communists can wage subversive war to capture a country, then it is high time that we paid them in the same coin. Admittedly, it is a long and arduous task to free a country behind the Iron or Bamboo Curtain. But, if our objective was to create a situation akin to that in Hungary, and then be prepared to help, with the end objective of uniting Vietnam again under a Free Government, there would be a considerably larger program to be planned for actions against North Vietnam.

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 63 A 1803, Vietnam—Taylor Group. Top Secret.

[2] See Document 173.

First, however, the situation in South Vietnam would have to be stabilized much more before it can be an effective base for operations aimed at liberating North Vietnam. On the other hand, if the Vietnamese thought that we were serious about freeing all of Vietnam from Communism, our present defensive counter-measures would be greatly enhanced. The Communist cadres and those supporting the regime do so mainly in a belief that they are going with the wave of the future. If we started actions to destroy the conviction that the Communists were here to stay, a lot of the support would start weakening, including support in the South.

Operations in southern Laos, by the 77th Brigade (1st Observation Corps), need to be continued as currently planned. DOD in Washington is now considering a request for assistance in training more Vietnamese for the 77th Brigade. It is possible that further teamwork . . . could be developed for such operations. An example would be the use of Redeye weapons by Army Special Forces personnel, who could accompany a 77th Brigade team to the Tchepone area to knock out Soviet aircraft; selected Special Forces personnel are now taking a familiarization course with this weapon, which is being developed further to improve its guidance system, with the intent of undertaking just such an operation as noted above.

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187. Memorandum From the Secretary of Defense's Deputy Assistant for Special Operations (Lansdale) to the President's Military Representative (Taylor) [1]

Saigon, October 23, 1961.

SUBJECT

Unconventional Warfare

This is in answer to the third question you posed to me on the above subject. [2]

3. Are preparations adequate for waging unconventional warfare?

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 63 A 1803, Vietnam—Taylor Group. Top Secret.

[2] See Document 173.

One of the vital elements in waging war against guerrillas is to have the military and the population so close to each other that the guerrillas cannot enjoy popular support. Reports of the situation in Vietnam indicate that the VC continue to enjoy much popular support, even though this is often obtained through terrorist activities. It is a difficult task to ensure the continuing "brotherhood" of the Vietnamese soldiers with Vietnamese civilians, but this important command responsibility cannot be over-emphasized. The U.S. Army was recently assigned executive responsibility for Civic Action in Defense, and has officers in Vietnam who have just completed an intensive study of Vietnamese civic action. It might be worth while to make Vietnam a major test center for this Army activity, and I intend to so recommend to the Secretary of Defense.

The Vietnamese Army is in need of loudspeakers for tactical psychological warfare. Present equipment is old and inadequate, and includes some makeshift equipment I sent in from the Philippines in 1953. None are available under MAP, since apparently the U.S. has not developed a loudspeaker for tactical operations. The Combat Development and Test Center is working on the problem, with a prototype of a lightweight, high-powered (2½ miles range) set. The set is "High Power Voice Amplifier, Type DE-1492-A", made by Electro Mechanics Inc.

Major Bentz, Psywar advisor at MAAG, recommends that the 3 months test by CDTC be shortened and that if successful, a sufficient number be obtained to equip each Psywar Battalion and each Regimental G-5 section. If a Psywar Battalion is organized in the Civil Guard, it should be so equipped also. 45 loudspeakers for the Psywar Battalions, 24 for the Regiments, and 36 for the Civil Guard.

A powerful airborne loudspeaker also is needed. USAF does not have this capability at present. However, the 4400th CCTS (Jungle Jim) offers a good means for its introduction into the USAF inventory. I will work on this.

Two 17x22 presses are included in the TOE of the Vietnamese Psywar Directorate. It is estimated that it will require 280 days for delivery to Saigon. Major Bentz suggested that these presses might be procured from U.S. Army organizational equipment, to expedite delivery, and the equipment replaced in the U.S. units. I will follow through.

188. Telegram From the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (McGarr) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Felt) [1]

Saigon, October 23, 1961—10:55 p.m.

MAGCHKNDP 1943. Serious flood in Mekong Delta area upstream from Can Tho and Sa Dec (worst since 1937) raises possibility that flood relief could be justification for moving in US military personnel for humanitarian purposes with subsequent retention if desirable. Gen Taylor and Ambassador Nolting evaluating feasibility and desirability. State Dept informed of possibility by Embassy-520, 21 [*20*] Oct, and CINCPAC by Embassy-54 [*194?*]. [2] Following data furnished for your information.

Brig Gen Eggleston this hqs made air and ground reconnaissance of delta area 22 Oct and talked with western delegate in charge of all flood relief on the ground and with one province chief. Flooding is widespread and up to 500,000 personnel, mostly civilians, involved. At many towns and agrovilles there is no dry land and water up to eaves of buildings. Current is swift making it impossible for people to live on boats or rafts adjacent to their homes which have not been washed away. Water starting to recede slowly and no upstream indication of a higher crest to follow. Hydrologists predict that waters will recede very slowly.

Greatest future needs appear to be food, seed and other crop assistance, medical personnel and supplies, construction supplies for buildings, water purification and reconstruction of roads and bridges. Strong indication on part of GVN officials that they have the personnel skills for relief work and only need supplies and funds. USOM providing these.

Senior US personnel of opinion that flood relief work is not effectively organized, that officials do not realize magnitude or seriousness of required relief work and that personnel assistance is required. In the event GVN request US assistance in the form of personnel as well as equipment for flood relief, an excellent opportunity immediately is presented for introduction of US military forces for humanitarian purposes. Such action must however come as result of political evaluation and decision.

Types of units which could feasibly be used are:

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 851H.49/10–2361. Secret; Priority. Repeated to JCS (J–3), DOD, and the Department of State for attention CTR and Task Force Vietnam. The source text is the copy sent to the Department of State. Received in the Department at 6:01 a.m. on October 25.

[2] Not printed.

A. Helicopter squadrons. A minimum of one H–34 squadron possible carrier based for immediate capability.

B. Medical teams including preventive medicine control teams (Team LA), medical teams (OA) and medical supply teams (Team FC).

C. Water supply and water purification units.

D. Engineer construction battalions. Actual need not too urgent in flood area; however, they could be used to improve counterinsurgency and contingency posture after minimal repairs to roads and bridges in delta area.

E. Supply maintenance and administrative units to support operation forces.

By utilizing US forces in areas controlled by ARVN, security would not be a serious problem; however it must be recognized that any US troops introduced must be prepared to protect themselves and terms of reference and status of forces agreements agreeable to US and Vietnamese Governments completely spelled out. If as result of Taylor visit and recommendations decision is made to support Diem with US troops, this is an excellent opportunity to minimize adverse publicity.

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189. Telegram From the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (McGarr) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Lemnitzer) [1]

Saigon, October 24, 1961.

SGN 747. At a meeting with Taylor and the Ambassador at 0845, 24 October preparatory to an 0900 meeting with President Diem, I was handed a paper [2] on possible additional forms of cooperation between U.S. and GVN in view of Viet Cong activities and the recent Mekong Delta flood as basis for discussions. These were not in nature of formal recommendations but as time was very short, I commented on only two of the six points covered. Others such as additional helicopters to improve combat mobility, better intelligence by Joint Governmental action, preventing cross border infiltration, and emphasizing the nature of the threat here and to the world have all been covered in my correspondence with you over the past 14 months.

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Lemnitzer Papers, 1961 Eyes Only Messages. Secret; Eyes Only. No time of transmission is indicated on the source text.

[2] Not found, but the paper's main points are outlined in Taylor's telegram, *infra*.

The first point was the introduction of military forces in the nature of a flood relief task force for relief and rehabilitation. This would have the advantage of withdrawal if desirable policy-wise after reconstruction period and would contain logistic, transportation, medical and combat troops. It was thought that the combat element considered would be approximately a Battle Group. I stated that with the known Viet Cong strength in III corps, the recent significant increase in incidents and the additional Viet Cong capability for further Viet Cong increase, I felt this strength inadequate especially as the non-combat units will probably be scattered in approximately thirty locations. When it was indicated that possibly some combat units might be used in the high plateau, I stated this would further fragment U.S. forces and render them vulnerable to successful attack by Viet Cong who have capability with strength in-country. I said I felt adequate forces must be provided to prevent this particularly since it appeared from his remarks that while most of the service forces were to be deployed in III CO UAAREA, possibly certain of combat forces might be used in the high plateau of II corps. He said it was my job to prevent fragmentation and that he would be disappointed in U.S. troops who were unable to protect themselves. I reminded him that careful arrangements would have to be worked out at governmental level to ensure that I had the requisite control and authority over the use of U.S. forces.

The above was followed by a brief discussion on the paragraph concerning a Joint-GVN team which would survey each province to make an overall determination on what was needed to put the whole house in order. This to include command arrangements counter-insurgency planning, supply and equipment for all Military and Para-military forces and the like. This is an extension of my previous recommendation to GVN following the significant Viet Cong success at Vinh Binh for Joint Group to inspect all static defenses countrywide. I said this was sound concept however that MAAG should not be responsible for "B" boards on RVNAF officers. I brought this up because Diem and Thaun have, particularly following a Viet Cong success, repeatedly downgraded their generals to me and this would afford them the opportunity to put the onus of getting rid of certain of them on MAAG. This would put MAAG in an intolerable position vis-à-vis the RVNAF Officer Corps. General Taylor did not answer but Ambassador Nolting agreed this was valid reasoning.

At this point, discussion was terminated in order to depart for meeting with Diem. When I said I would see them at palace, the Ambassador said in effect they had decided to keep meeting small and only "The Four of Them" would attend. I said that as American Military Advisor I recommended strongly that I go as most of the

discussion would be about the military. General Taylor said I do not agree that you should go.

I then said to General Taylor, as Representative of the JCS in Vietnam, I recommend that I attend. General Taylor said this was a personal meeting with Diem and I was not to go. I answered it is your decision General.

Mainly, I am particularly concerned regarding local loss of prestige in eyes of GVN which as you know is most important here. This is meant only as background for your personal information.

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190. Telegram From the President's Military Representative (Taylor) to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, October 25, 1961—3 p.m.

536. For Under Sec Johnson.

1. The essential conclusions which we have reached at the end of a week of briefings, consultations, and field trips follow:

A. There is a critical political-military situation in SVN brought on by Western policy in Laos and by the continued build-up of the VC and their recent successful attacks. These circumstances coupled with the major flood disaster in the southwestern provinces have combined to create a deep and pervasive crisis of confidence and a serious loss in national morale.

B. In the field, the military operations against the VC are ineffective because of the absence of reliable intelligence on the enemy, an unclear and unresponsive channel of command responsibility in the armed forces and the tactical immobility of the VN ground forces. This immobility leads to a system of passive, fragmented defense conceding the initiative to the enemy and leaving him free to pick the targets of attack. The harassed population exposed to these attacks turn to the Government for better protection and the latter responds by assigning more static missions to the Army units, thus adding to their immobility. In the end, the Army is allowed neither to train nor to fight but awaits enemy attacks in relative inaction.

C. The situation in Saigon is volatile but, while morale is down and complaints against the Government are rife, there is not hard

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/10-2561. Top Secret; Priority. The Department of State was asked to pass the telegram to the White House for Bundy, Defense for McNamara, JCS for Lemnitzer, and CIA for Dulles. Received in the Department at 9:06 a.m. Telegrams to and from General Taylor in Saigon were numbered in sequence with other telegrams to and from Saigon. The incoming telegrams bear Ambassador Nolting's signature.

evidence of a likely coup against Diem. He still has no visible rival or replacement.

2. To cope with the foregoing situation, we are considering recommending a number of possible forms of GVN–US cooperation to reverse the present downward trend, stimulate an offensive spirit and build up morale. In company with Ambassador Nolting, Dr. Rostow and Mr. Mendenhall, I discussed some of these Oct 24 with Diem and Thuan, advancing them as personal ideas to which I was seeking their informal reaction.[2] The following outline, distributed in French translation at the start of the interview, indicates the scope of the discussion.

A. Improvement of intelligence on VC: The available intelligence on VC insurgency is inadequate both for tactical requirements and for basis of judgment of situation at governmental levels. A joint GVN–US effort should be able to improve organization, techniques and end product to mutual advantage both parties.

B. Joint survey of security situation at provincial level: The current situation can best be appraised at provincial level where the basic intelligence is found, the incidents occur, and the defenses are tested. The problems vary from province to province and hence require local analysis on the spot. Such a survey should result in better understanding of such important matters as quality of basic intelligence on VC, needs of Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps, command relationships between provincial and Army officials and conditions under which assumption of offensive might be possible.

C. Improvement of army mobility: It appears that size of ARVN cannot be much increased before end 1962. To make it more effective and allow it to cope with increasing number of VC, it must be given greater mobility. Such mobility can come from two sources, (1) freeing army from static missions and (2) making available to it improved means of transport, notably helicopters and light aircraft. Both methods should be considered.

D. Send blocking infiltration into high plateau: Increase in enemy forces in high plateau requires special measures for defense and for counter-guerrilla actions. It is suggested that a carefully tailored "border ranger force" be organized from existing Ranger Units and introduced into the difficult terrain along the Laos/Vietnam frontier for attack and defense against the Viet Cong. This force should be trained and equipped for extended service on the frontier and for operations against the communications lines of the VC who have infiltrated into the high plateau and adjacent areas.[3]

E. Introduction of US Military Forces: GVN is faced with major civil problem arising from flood devastation in western provinces. Its allies should offer help to GVN according to their means. In the case

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[2] A more detailed report of this conversation was transmitted in telegram 540 from Saigon, October 25. (*Ibid.*)

[3] Paragraph D and the heading for paragraph E were omitted from the text as transmitted from Saigon. They were transmitted in telegram 544 from Saigon, October 25, with instructions that they be inserted at the proper places in the text of telegram 536. (*Ibid.*)

of O.S., two ways of rendering help should be considered. One is of emergency type, such as offer of US military helicopters for reconnaissance of conditions of flooded areas and for emergency delivery medical supplies and like. A more significant contribution might be a flood relief task force, largely military in composition, to work with GVN over an extended period for rehabilitation of area. Such a force might contain engineer, medical, signal, and transportation elements as well as combat troops for the protection of relief operations. Obviously, such a military force would also provide U.S. military presence in Viet Nam and would constitute military reserve in case of heightened military crisis.

F. Actions to emphasize national emergency and beginning of a new phase in the war: We should consider jointly all possible measures to emphasize turning point has been reached in dealing with Communist aggression. Possible actions might include appeal to United Nations, an announcement by GVN of governmental changes to cope with crisis and exchange of letters between the two heads of state expressing their partnership in a common cause.

3. Diem's reaction on all points was favorable. He expressed satisfaction with idea of introducing US forces in connection with flood relief activities, observing that even the opposition elements in his Congress had joined with the majority in supporting need for presence of US forces. In the course of the meeting, nothing was formally proposed or approved but the consensus was that the points considered might form framework for a program of increased GVN–US cooperation offering promise of overcoming many of the current difficulties of GVN. There were no specific figures discussed with regard to such matters as troop strengths, additional equipment, or flood relief.

4. As follow-up on this session with Diem, in consultation with Embassy and MAAG, we will develop specific recommendations for carrying out the concepts discussed with Diem. To assist us, Ambassador Nolting is obtaining further data on the flood from the GVN. We have agreed with Diem to guard against any premature leaks of these matters under consideration.

5. Because of the importance of acting rapidly once we have made up our minds, I will cable my recommendations to Washington enroute home.

191. Telegram From the President's Military Representative (Taylor) to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, October 25, 1961—1 p.m.

537. Eyes only for Rusk and Under Secretary Johnson. Our mission is winding up its business in Saigon; and moving to Bangkok October 25. Results to date are reported in 536. [2]

With regard to the critical question of introducing U.S. military forces into VN:

My view is that we should put in a task force consisting largely of logistical troops for the purpose of participating in flood relief and at the same time of providing a U.S. military presence in VN capable of assuring Diem of our readiness to join him in a military showdown with the Viet Cong or Viet Minh. To relate the introduction of these troops to the needs of flood relief seems to me to offer considerable advantages in VC [*VN*] and abroad. It gives a specific humanitarian task as the prime reason for the coming of our troops and avoids any suggestion that we are taking over responsibility for the security of the country. As the task is a specific one, we can extricate our troops when it is done if we so desire. Alternatively, we can phase them into other activities if we wish to remain longer.

The strength of the force I have in mind on the order of 6–8000 troops. Its initial composition should be worked out here after study of the possible requirements and conditions for its use and subsequent modifications made with experience.

In addition to the logistical component, it will be necessary to include some combat troops for the protection of logistical operations and the defense of the area occupied by U.S. forces. Any troops coming to VN may expect to take casualties.

Needless to say, this kind of task force will exercise little direct influence on the campaign against the V.C. It will, however, give a much needed shot in the arm to national morale, particularly if combined with other actions showing that a more effective working relationship in the common cause has been established between the GVN and the U.S.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/10–2561. Top Secret; Priority; Eyes Only. The Department of State was asked to pass the telegram to the White House eyes only for the President, Defense eyes only for McNamara, and JCS eyes only for Lemnitzer. Received in the Department at 8:23 a.m.

[2] *Supra.*

192. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, October 25, 1961—9 p.m.

541. Taylor and Rostow, accompanied by Gardiner, McGarr, Mendenhall and me, had final talk with Diem and Thuan October 25. Main points as follows:

1. Diem stressed importance of reinforcement of aviation: particularly helicopters. Taylor and I used this opportunity to make clear to Diem that we envisaged helicopters piloted by Americans and constituting American units under American commanders which would cooperate with Vietnamese military commands. Taylor noted that there is no other immediate solution to helicopter problem other than to introduce American helicopter units.

2. Thuan brought up desire for B–26's AF [*and*] T–28's in order to place air units at more numerous spots around country so that they can respond quickly to targets. Taylor replied that while there is need for photo reconnaissance airplanes, there is no need at this time for additional bombers as existing ones not being adequately used. He stated that remedy is to improve system of bases, communications and liaison.

3. Taylor told Diem it would be useful if he and I could develop specifics with respect to political-psychological point in paper which Taylor presented to Diem October 24 (our 540 [2]). Taylor pointed out this would be very useful to him in Washington because he will be faced with question that, if program he proposes is adopted, what will be chances of early success. In response Thuan's question asking for exact meaning of this point in Taylor's paper, latter said there has been loss of confidence among both Vietnamese and American people about situation in Vietnam and we need to determine together what measures can be taken to restore confidence. Rostow commented that secret of turning point is offensive action. Diem stated complete psychological mobilization required so that everything can be done to raise potential GVN forces and damage enemy's potential. He referred to GVN efforts in past to collaborate more closely with US in military planning and said these efforts had run up against wall of secrecy surrounding US and SEATO military plans.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/10-2561. Secret; Priority. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd, Phnom Penh, Vientiane, Bangkok with instructions to pass to General Taylor, and Geneva for FECON. Received in the Department at 3:06 p.m.

[2] See footnote 2, Document 190. The paper under reference is outlined in Document 190.

4. Taylor referred to Diem's comments in earlier talk about shortage of capable personnel and suggested US might assist by lending personnel. Diem replied that US could help in this respect in training field. Thuan then brought up dilemma facing GVC [*GVN*] re instructors at Thui Duc Reserve Officers School. Vietnamese military commanders refuse release their best personnel as instructors but existing instructors, who are not very good, have insufficient moral authority over new officers' training class drawn from best educated persons available in Vietnam. Thuan, backed by President, specifically requested American instructors for this school as soon as possible since course of training already under way.

5. Thuan said that he had dropped earlier request for US instructors for Civil Guard because of language difficulty but is still interested in possibility (which he had raised in Washington)[3] of Chinese or Korean cadres for Civil Guard and SDC. He said GVN prefers Chinese and asked for Taylor's reaction. Taylor replied question presents difficulty from political point of view. Diem said that [name deleted] talked with Chiang Kai-shek on recent visit to Taipei, who said it would be delicate matter to send troops to Vietnam but said he could send cadres, even for combat. Thuan, in response to questioning, said that while presence Chinese troops in Vietnam could not be kept secret, he thought use of cadres could be, even though they might number thousands.

6. Diem brought up as pressing question spraying facilities requested from US about month ago for destruction of rice crop being raised in certain areas of high plateau for VC use; he stressed urgency immediate action on this point because harvest will be carried out in November and December.

7. Diem also brought up again need for armored boat assistance in struggle for rice crop in delta area with VC. He underscored that this is great offensive that must be conducted during upcoming months. If this is not won then Saigon itself will be seriously affected.

8. Thuan expressed grave concern over creation of strong VC base at Tchepone in Laos. He said that artillery being brought in there is not for defense of Tchepone but will be used against Vietnam. He wanted to know what could be done about elimination this base.

9. Diem expressed desire for General Lansdale's services here in Vietnam.[4]

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[3] See Document 68.

[4] Written in the margin at this point in an unidentified hand are the words, "No. No. NO!"

10. In conclusion Taylor pointed out that he has discussed overall concept with Diem and that life would have to be breathed into this concept by further detailed discussions and follow-up actions by Diem and me.

Diem asked Taylor to thank President Kennedy for his interest in Vietnam.

Nolting

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193. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, October 25, 1961—9 p.m.

545. Task Force VN. There has been noticeable rise in Saigon's political temperature during past week. Taylor visit, though reassuring in some respects, has been interpreted by many persons as demonstrating critical stage which VC insurgency has reached. Public funeral of VC-tortured and murdered Col Nam had profound effect on Saigon public. Following deterioration of general security conditions over past two months cancellation October 26 National Day celebrations to devote resources to flood relief and terse, dramatic declaration national emergency caught an unprepared public by surprise and contributed additional unsettling elements to growing atmosphere of uneasiness.

Judging from conversations we have had with such persons as President National Assembly, Vice President, another prominent National Assembly Deputy, lawyer who is regular Governor for Southeast ASIS, former Foreign Minister, etc, net effect most these developments has been negative rather than positive. Flux and uncertainty now beginning develop. As result there has been some scare buying and stocking. Certain commodity prices such as rice and pork have again moved up. (From previous 1961 average price of about 7 piasters per kilo, first quality rice stood at 9.5 at beginning last week, 11.9 October 25.) This in itself most unfortunate development, though flood conditions in southwest probably as much a factor in it as increased insecurity.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/10–2561. Secret. Repeated to Phnom Penh, Vientiane, Geneva for FECON, Paris, Tokyo, Bangkok, Manila, CINCPAC for PolAd, and London. Received in the Department at 8:50 p.m.

This growing public disquietude accompanied by increasing dissatisfaction with Diem's methods of administration on part senior GVN officials. There is considerable Cabinet level criticism and growing though still inchoate determination force organizational reforms on President. Similar attitude seems be developing in ARVN upper levels. Though trend of thinking these groups taking parallel courses, there nothing indicate at this moment that collaboration between them taking place. Beginnings of this would, of course, be serious indicator something brewing.

At same time . . . movement certain platoon to company-size VC units (totalling perhaps 200–500 men) toward Saigon to profit from any disturbances or confusion which may occur. Knowledge these reports within GVN apparently tending deter disaffected officials from developing radical place [*plans?*] at this moment.

Situation here thus one of insecurity, uneasiness and emergent instability. A genuine and important military victory over VC would do more than anything else to redress balance and allay for moment high-level mutterings of need for change. On other hand, further deterioration of situation over next few weeks or months or new VC success similar Phuoc Hanh incident might well bring situation to head.

Nolting

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194. Memorandum for the Record by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Bundy) [1]

Washington, October 25, 1961.

SUBJECT

Conversation with Admiral Felt, October 25, 1961 [2]

1. *Viet-Nam.* Mr. Williams and I asked Admiral Felt what he thought the major items were on which we could move at once without awaiting the Taylor report. He singled out the following:

a. *Helicopters* in a strength adequate to provide a force for each of the province governments and for the central government, i.e., 4 in

[1] Source: Department of State, Bundy Files, 1961 China Secret.
[2] Felt was apparently in Washington for consultations.

all. He supposed that 2 Army aviation companies would be necessary to man these, and said he had no judgment whether these should be in uniform or sheep-dipped. He thought this item was vital in Diem's mind and as a basic military necessity to provide mobility.

Comment. FE should get status on this. It may be a political question, but in this connection Admiral Felt suggested using the flood situation as an immediate cover. This idea should certainly be followed up strongly.

b. *An Army engineer and a Navy Seabee unit.* These could build a pipeline for POL from the off-loading point near Saigon to the Saigon airport, (we asked about sabotage possibility and he admitted that this would be a problem), and also to build a road east from Attopeu in Laos. For the latter purpose, combat troops would be needed to protect the engineers.

Comment. This undoubtedly has serious political hurdles, but again the flood situation might provide a cover for immediate activity that would lay a foundation.

c. *T–28 Aircraft.* Admiral Pirie had just informed him that the Navy had a going production line and could add seal-proof tanks and armor at once (making the Navy version similar to the Air Force version) and deliver thereafter in 6 weeks.

Comment. This is contrary to previous information, and should certainly be followed up at once. I believe it is agreed in principle that these additional aircraft should be supplied.

. . . . . .

Apart from these urgent needs, the Admiral had the following comments:

e. In general, he thought that the Taylor report would probably recommend all possible assistance short of the introduction of combat forces. (Apparently this would not exclude the helicopters and engineer operations suggested above.)

f. The Caribou aircraft need was very much downgraded by Admiral Felt. He thought C–47's could do the job and that the Caribou had simply appealed to Diem when introduced by the Godel group.

g. Admiral Felt did see a legitimate need for T–33 aircraft, with 2 as a starter. The military purpose would be to build up a Vietnamese air defense capability, leading eventually to the introduction of F–86F aircraft as in Thailand. He wants an immediate start in training Vietnamese pilots in the United States.

Comment. This seems much more dubious to me from a military standpoint. If the North Vietnamese or ChiCom air forces become involved now or later, surely we would deal with them by US carrier aircraft. In any event, any useful Vietnamese

capability is at least 1–2 years away, and this might be a poor time to divert effort for such long lead-time projects.

h. *ChiNats.* Admiral Felt reported Diem's view that some ChiNat forces could be introduced, naturalized as Vietnamese, and used profitably in the Delta area, where there is already a large number of ethnic Chinese. He understood that State had turned this down, and asked us to see what could be done.

Comment. FE should review the bidding on this one and see if we can make additional arguments.

[Here follows discussion of military assistance to Korea and Pakistani forces in SEATO.]

William P. Bundy
Acting

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195. Memorandum From the Deputy Director of the Vietnam Task Force (Wood) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson) [1]

Washington, October 25, 1961.

SUBJECT

Diplomatic and Political Preparations for Sending U.S. Troops to Viet-Nam

The following suggested guidelines for diplomatic and other preparation prior to sending U.S. troops to Viet-Nam are set forth in outline form. They were requested today by Secretary Johnson.

I. Recommendation

That 6–8,000 U.S. logistical troops plus combat troops for their protection be sent to Viet-Nam to participate in flood relief and to provide a military presence which will assure President Diem that we will join him in a military showdown. These troops would have a specific humanitarian task in a specified area. They could be taken out after the flood, or phased into other activities.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5/10-2361. Top Secret; Limit Distribution. Also addressed to McConaughy. Drafted and initialed by Wood and sent through S/S. A copy was sent to Anderson (SEA).

II. Diplomatic and Political Factors Which Cannot Be Ignored

1. *For the U.S.*

A. *Troops.* A prior decision that if necessary we will send in enough troops to finish the job or alternatively a prior decision that we will fix a ceiling (say 100,000) on the number of U.S. troops which we would commit to Southeast Asia no matter what circumstances might arise. (Presidential decision prior to November 6, date of submission of Note to ICC—see below).

B. *Command.* A prior decision to simplify the U.S. chain of command, e.g. a U.S. Commander for Southeast Asia whose plans would require a) the general prior approval of the U.S. Ambassador as the President's representative, and b) the subsequent approval and cooperation of the local Government.

If the U.S. effort is to succeed, the U.S. Command structure must be simplified so that our actions may be flexible, resolute, and rapid. Our Commander should be the best available for guerilla war, perhaps a Marine General. (Presidential decision prior to November 11, date on which first contingents of U.S. troops would arrive.)

2. *For Viet-Nam*

Before committing ourselves so fully to Viet-Nam and to the Vietnamese Government we should require, as a minimum, the following pledges from Diem:

A. *Military.* Simplified chain of command. Intelligence coordination.

B. *Administrative.* Increased salaries for provincial officials; reduced salaries for Saigon officials. Rotate officials between Saigon and provinces.

C. *Political.* Create, under Diem, an Internal Security Council through which Diem would conduct all business.

D. Concurrence in proposed U.S. Command structure (see above).

E. An assurance that we would have full GVN support for all movements of troops and equipment in Viet-Nam as necessary. (Exchange of letters between President Kennedy and President Diem prior to November 11. Assigned to: Ambassador Nolting and Mr. Cottrell.)

3. *Allied Cooperation.*

This should be limited to gifts for flood relief. We cannot hope to defeat the fast moving Viet Cong if we are required to seek multilateral consultation and concurrence prior to every move. It is difficult enough to obtain fast action within the U.S. Government and in cooperation with the Vietnamese Government. We should seek the general assent and approval of our allies. As leaders of the Free World, we must retain responsibility for our actions in a war situation. This applies to SEATO and the UN as well as to individu-

al nations. We must show great respect for, but not be entangled by or ask decisions of any international Organization.

4. *Timing.*

First contingent U.S. troops to arrive November 11 while there is flood work to do. This allows time to inform world opinion, but not time enough for international objections to coalesce. It gives 16 days for military preparations.

III. Steps

1. Continue and increase publicity on DRV threat and importance of Viet-Nam's independence. (Timing: continuous; Responsibility: Jorden; Heavner of TF/VN; P, USIA.)

2. Parallel U.S. and Vietnamese diplomatic conversations with the British, Canadians and Indians to inform them that the Vietnamese Government considers that the Geneva Cease Fire has been flagrantly violated and this situation plus the flood disaster has created a situation in which the GVN has decided to ask increased U.S. assistance in the flooded area. We should not indicate what form our assistance may take. It would be unconvincing to cite only the flood as a reason for bringing in U.S. troops. The purpose is to give the ICC powers some private, advance notice of our views and intentions. (Timing: November 1; Drafting responsibility: C.B. Wood.)

3. *ICC.* Prepare with the GVN a Note which they would submit privately in Saigon to the ICC and to the British Co-chairman (through the British Embassy) stating that due to the flood disaster and the continued violation of the Geneva Cease Fire Agreement by the DRV, the GVN has decided that it will request the assistance of U.S. troops to assist in the flood relief program thus freeing Vietnamese troops to defend their country. In extending this invitation, the GVN does not criticize the ICC. It considers the situation has gone beyond minor infractions of the cease fire which the ICC was designed to control. Regretfully, it can no longer voluntarily observe Articles 16 and 17 of the Geneva Accords controlling the importation of men and equipment. It is prepared to resume observance as soon as the DRV ceases to violate them. This Note to be supported by a White Paper based on the Jorden Report. (Timing: November 6; Drafting responsibility: Jorden and Wood).

4. Presidential Discussion of Step 3 with Prime Minister Nehru on November 7.[2]

5. Public circulation of GVN Note and White Paper and of U.S. reply at SEATO and the UN.

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[2] Nehru was scheduled to visit the United States in early November.

With the greatest respect we should inform these bodies that in response to the GVN's request we are sending a limited number of U.S. troops to help in the flood relief and that we consider their presence an important symbol of our determination to assist Viet-Nam in maintaining its independence. We will welcome contributions to the relief work, and will be prepared to consider withdrawing our troops as soon as the UN and/or SEATO is prepared to send to Viet-Nam an international force which can successfully assume these responsibilities. We will be prepared, with the GVN, to enter international negotiations on Viet-Nam as soon as the DRV adheres to the Geneva Accords by removing all its troops and cadres from Viet-Nam, but not before. (Timing: November 9; Responsibility: Mr. McConaughy and Mr. Johnson.)

6. *Geneva Conference (if it has survived the above).* A full statement that we still support the concept of an effective ICC in Laos as a means of enforcing the existing cease fire. However no ICC, whether in Laos or Viet-Nam, can be expected to control a war situation. It would need a body of international troops under its control. We should make it clear that we will only discuss Laos at Geneva. (Timing: November 10; Responsibility: Ambassador Harriman.)

7. Ambassador Trimble explains our purpose generally to Sihanouk. (Timing: November 10.)

8. Arrival of first contingents of U.S. troops by air at the flood area at dawn on November 11 coupled with a U.S.-GVN public request that all fighting in Viet-Nam cease for 24 hours in observance of Armistice Day—and a pledge that no GVN or U.S. soldier will fire a shot until a Viet Cong soldier attacks.

IV. Concurrent Actions—October 25–November 11.

1. Appoint George Tanham [3] as a temporary Special Assistant to Ambassador Nolting to study the flood area with a MAAG and a USOM representative and submit recommendations to the Ambassador on how the flood relief and rehabilitation work can best be carried out. They should, if possible, work with Vietnamese opposite numbers. They should suggest clear-cut roles for U.S. troops, MAAG, USOM and IVS volunteers and for representatives of private, charitable organizations willing to work in the flood area. They should consult with the Thompson mission and formulate recommendations for a simple, effective rehabilitation program designed to give maximum credit to GVN officials. (Warren Silver of TF/VN to draft message to Saigon).

[3] Tanham was an employee of the Rand Corporation

2. DOD to have full and unimpeded responsibility for getting the troops to the flood area.

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196. Telegram From the President's Military Representative (Taylor) to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Bangkok, October 27, 1961—8 p.m.

146. Eyes only for Amb Nolting. The fol outlines actions agreed upon during Gen Taylor's visit in Saigon. Memo for record [2] is being pouched this date.

In order to reduce reaction time fol approval of some or all of the recommendations growing out of the visit of the Taylor Mission, Emb Saigon and the Taylor Mission will undertake the fol actions without delay:

A. Improvement of intelligence on the V.C.

(1) The anticipated form of the mission recommendation will be to urge a joint GVN–US effort to improve the organization, techniques and end product of the intelligence bearing on the V.C. insurgency. . . .

(2) The Emb Saigon will develop a specific proposal along these lines for discussion with the GVN, repeating to Washington such reinforcements in personnel and equipment as may be necessary to support the plan.

B. A joint survey of the security situation at the provincial level.

(1) The Mission will recommend that such a survey be encouraged for the purpose of improving US knowledge of what takes place at the grass roots of the insurgency and for acquiring a greater ability to influence the GVN to take appropriate measures.

(2) The Emb Saigon will propose to the GVN the composition of the survey parties and a procedure for their operation.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 120.1551K/10-2761. Secret; Eyes Only. Repeated to the Department for U. Alexis Johnson as telegram 625, which is the source text. Telegrams to and from General Taylor in Bangkok were numbered in sequence with other telegrams to and from Bangkok. The incoming telegrams bear Ambassador Young's signature.

[2] Dated October 25, signed by Taylor, and transmitted as an attachment to Bagley's memorandum of October 27 to Nolting. (Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878, Vietnam—Taylor)

C. Improvement of army mobility.

(1) The Mission will recommend, upon return to Washington, the prompt provision of US mil helicopters up to about 3 companies.

(2) The Emb–MAAG will report to Washington the command and control procedures recommended for the operation of these helicopters and the plan for their location and administration. At the same time the MAAG will recommend the amount and kind of light aviation necessary to improve the over all mobility of the army and, in particular, to support the proposed border ranger force.

D. Blocking infiltration in the high plateau.

(1) The mission will recommend US Govt support for the creation of the "carefully tailored border ranger force" in terms of US advisors, authorized VN personnel ceiling and special equipment.

(2) The Emb–MAAG will press upon the GVN the prompt organization of such a force, utilizing existing ranger units and will report to Washington the requirements in US personnel and equipment.

E. Introduction of US military forces.

(1) The mission will recommend the prompt introduction of a flood relief task force of a composition to be recommended by the Emb, Saigon. It is felt that such a force could arrive piece-meal if the arrival as a package will substantially delay the initial contingent.

(2) The Emb–MAAG will recommend promptly to Washington the composition of mission, and schedule of arrival of such a force and tentative thinking on where it will be located and how administered.

F. Actions to emphasize the national emergency and a new phase in the war.

(1) The mission will discuss in Washington the actions which can be taken there to focus attention upon the new phase which we are entering in conjunction with the GVN. Among the actions considered would be a letter from President Kennedy indicating to President Diem the new forms of support which the US Govt offers.

(2) The Emb, Saigon will urge upon Pres Diem the need to announce governmental changes calculated to raise confidence in Saigon and Washington in the probability of success of the new program. It will give specific consideration to the desirability of a letter from President Diem appealing for US aid to cope with the double disaster of the Viet Cong aggression and the flood in the southwestern provinces.

The Emb, Saigon will keep Gen Taylor informed during his return trip to Washington of new developments arising from the foregoing follow-up actions.

197. Telegram From the President's Military Representative (Taylor) to the Department of State [1]

Bangkok, October 27, 1961—9 p.m.

626. Sec State for Under Sec Johnson. Reference: Saigon 536. [2] By way of Ewell's daily summary [3] I get impression that there may be a tendency to regard the concept of a flood relief task force as essentially a cover plan for the introduction of US troops into VN. Such is not my view. The flood in VN is a real emergency program, capable of giving real assistance to the VN authorities charged with relief measures as well as a military reinforcement to assist in safeguarding the area from a return of the Viet Cong who have fled before the high waters.

This concept does not amount to a cover as it undertakes to conceal nothing. It does give our forces a good reason for coming and the termination of flood relief, a matter at least of months, would give our forces a good reason for going. In the meantime they would have satisfied Diem's request for troops with a commitment far smaller than that required to make a military or psychological impression if the announced purpose was merely to render aid to suppress the VC insurgency. If we come in for this latter purpose, we will have to talk in terms of the three divisions . . . .

I hope that thinking on the whole subject of aid for VN will not harden before my return. Behind each item contained in Saigon 536 is a number of considerations of considerable complexity which I would like to present personally before any decision is taken. I will complete my recommendations in Baguio and forward them about Nov 1. In the meantime I would urge immediate action to do the following:

(1) Get best estimate of the flood problem and determine a line of possible US actions to assist. It may be desirable to send a team of experts from US for survey.

(2) Determine availability of Army and Marine helicopter companies for prompt movement to VN. MAAG estimated requirement is about 64 cargo helicopters.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/10–2761. Top Secret. Repeated to Saigon for Nolting. The Department of State was asked also to pass for action to the White House personal for Bundy and Ewell.

[2] Document 190.

[3] Not further identified. Ewell, a member of Taylor's staff, was presumably providing, through White House channels, a summary of daily international developments to the Taylor Mission.

(3) Ask Emb Saigon for report on status of follow-up actions being taken on subjects reported in Saigon 536 as outlined in Bangkok's 146 to Saigon.[4]

[4] *Supra*

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198. Telegram From the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) to the President's Military Representative (Taylor), at Bangkok[1]

Washington, October 28, 1961.

The President requests that your conclusions on Vietnam, especially those relating to U.S. forces, not be discussed outside your immediate party in terms which would indicate your own final judgment. He is most concerned that you and he should have firm common ground when decisions are taken, and rumors of your conclusions could obviously be damaging.

Your Bangkok 626[2] just received and will be passed to the President in the morning. Concur in your three proposals for interim action and will follow up on them.

[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Trips and Conference Series, Taylor Trip. Secret; Eyes Only. The source text bears the notation, "Cable for dispatch via State Department." No other copy of this message has been found.

[2] *Supra*

199. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, October 28, 1961—noon.

558. Task Force VN. Thuan gave me following information today (October 27) on actions pursuant recent discussions between GVN, Taylor mission, and ourselves:

1. Flood relief and rehabilitation. GVN cabinet meeting today had decided set up organization for a broad nationwide contribution to flood relief and rehabilitation in delta, composing following elements;

(A) A steering committee in which diverse elements of SVN population and political opinion would be invited to participate, anti-Communist oppositionists, fence-sitters, businessmen, lawyers, trade unionists, etc., to be presided by National Assembly President Truong Van Le. Steering Committee would be charged with fund-raising, recruitment of volunteer workers from other provinces, including youth movement, boy scouts, women's organizations, and others. Steering committee would also furnish ideas for relief and rehabilitation, which would be screened by:

(B) Executive head of flood relief and rehabilitation Huynh Van Diem, an engineer who is now GVN Planning Commissioner. Huynh Van Diem would be man through whom US contribution would be tied in. He described by Thuan as able and tough-minded;

(C) Committee of control, headed by Nguyen Thanh Lap, well known banker. This committee would control expenditure of funds. I commended this broadly-based organization, and asked Thuan when the specific requirements paper would be ready. He promised it for Monday next. [2] (Will forward to Manila and Washington.)

2. Intelligence. Thuan said he had proposed to President Diem, who had accepted, reorganization of GVN intelligence services, combining present Sûreté (NBI) with CIO, with Colonel Yankee in charge. . . . Said that General La, present head Sûreté, would go out. GVN intends keep J–2 of ARVN separate but bring about closer coordination with reorganized CIO. I said this welcome decision, and felt sure we could help with US experts. (*Comment*. I particularly stressed need of best possible people from our side if this is to work. Specific requirements will follow. [3])

3. Survey teams. I said we are studying how best to organize these. Our tentative thought is about three people from each side,

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/10–2861. Secret; Priority; Limit Distribution. Repeated to Bangkok, Hong Kong (for General Taylor who was stopping there en route from Bangkok to Manila), Manila for General Taylor, Paris, London, Phnom Penh, Vientiane, Geneva for FECON, and CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] October 30.

[3] No subsequent communication on intelligence requirements was found.

and possibly three teams, to begin in most critical provinces. Thuan said his ideas corresponded with ours; that GVN seeking best men possible, but would find it difficult to find nine people of really high calibre, who could be spared. I suggested 2, or even 1, good teams preferable to three poor ones. Value of survey teams depends on quality of men on them.

4. Montagnard problem. In response to earlier suggestion from me, Thuan said President had agreed to appoint commissioner for Montagnards at high level in GVN. They are looking for best possible man to fill this position.

5. Border force. Thuan inquired whether request for 3,000-man augmentation for special forces was in addition to idea for ranger border force, and whether augmented special force would be under separate or same command nearer border force. He added that augmentation of special forces by 3,000 should not be done from existing military units, but if agreed should be recruited separately. I said that I would have to discuss this further; tentatively I thought that a special force for special operations should be continued under separate organization and command, but that I was not sure special force of 3 to 4,000 in addition to and separate from ranger border force was desirable. Thuan said he hoped special forces could be financed under separate budget not DOD budget. On ranger border force, Thuan thought up to 4 to 5,000 rangers could be organized and deployed as suggested by General Taylor. We discussed in some detail suggested arrangements for giving them airborne mobility. Thuan understands thoroughly that suggestion re US helicopter squadrons involves MAAG command of these transports on which effectiveness ranger force would depend, and fact that this would involve closest operational coordination and agreement between GVN commanders and MAAG. He feels this can be made to work provided best men selected on both sides under General Minh and General McGarr. Suggested General Lansdale as ideal choice to help organize ranger border force and to command US transport units assigned to help it.

6. Top-level GVN organization. Thuan reverted to this suggestion previously made to me privately[4] re possibility persuading President Diem to delegate full authority and responsibility, subject to Diem's policy directives, to executive board composed of Ngo Dinh Nhu, chairman, and 3 or 4 other members of present cabinet, including Thuan to carry out more efficiently and promptly GVN policy decisions. Said his present thought is that Nhu should be given a specific cabinet responsibility with, namely, coordinating secretary for national security. Said, as previously, that only person

[4] The date that this suggestion was made has not been determined

to whom President would delegate so much authority, and leave it delegated, was his brother Nhu. Said he felt such a board would materially improve GVN performance. Asked my reaction. I told him that I did not wish to meddle officially in questions involving personnel of Government of Vietnam, but that I say officially that any organization under President Diem's policy guidance which would give government greater efficiency and cut down on reaction time would be a welcome development, and is in fact an urgent necessity. I added that I did not know personally Mr. Nhu's ability as an executive, I had known him rather as a planning and philosophical type; but if Thuan and others felt that this would improve top-level organization and efficiency of GVN I personally would be inclined to try it. Thuan said he and others felt that this would make a definite improvement; that they could guarantee faster and better executive performance; and that in any [case] it was only feasible way to bring about a delegation of authority by the President and have it stick. (*Comment*: It is highly necessary to protect Thuan re this matter. He said he would talk to President and Nhu about it).

For General Taylor's and task force Washington information, we are developing here detailed recommendations on matters discussed by General Taylor with President Diem. These will be forwarded as soon as possible.

Nolting

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200. Letter From the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (McGarr) to the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) [1]

Saigon, October 30, 1961.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: Due to the increasing seriousness of the situation in Vietnam as well as General Taylor's suggestion that you might find my sensing of events useful, I shall follow this initial round up with pertinent recurring reports. Upon the completion of my first twelve months as Chief MAAG, Vietnam, this September, I forwarded to CINCPAC a brief but fairly comprehensive situation

[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 71 A 6489, Viet 091 Top Secret. The source text is stamped "SecDef has seen."

report.[2] This report, together with MAAG concepts for "Border Control," an outline of our proposed "Geographically Phased National Pacification Plan," the critical need for an overall National Plan with recommendations for improving the "Present GVN System of Control and Coordination of Counter-Insurgency,"[3] and MAAG's doctrinal treatise titled "Tactics and Techniques for Counter-Insurgent Operations"[4] is being hand carried to you by Brigadier General Ed Lansdale.

To very briefly summarize the past year, I feel that considerable progress has been made but that developing conditions leave much yet to be done with time of the essence. Due to Viet Cong actions, "finding time" for even marginal troop training has been a major problem since 1959. Therefore, training programs have been integrated and appropriately reoriented to improve overall ARVN, Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps training, while at the same time placing heavy emphasis on conducting counter-guerrilla operations. Induction of the additional 20,000 force ceiling recommended by MAAG in October 1960, approved in May 1961 and further retarded due to a question of U.S. fund support, will be completed by January 1962. This 20,000 which was primarily justified as a "rotational training base" and to strengthen the RVNAF logistical support is, of course, not yet adequately trained or ready for employment except in case of critical emergency and then on a partially trained basis. The induction of the additionally approved 30,000 will begin January 1962 with a completion date of January 1963. To increase ARVN combat capabilities, a Combat Development Test Center has been organized and MAAG has developed and furnished the RVNAF a specially tailored tactical counter-guerrilla treatise titled "Tactics and Techniques for Counter-Insurgent Operations," which has been used extensively since last November by MAAG advisors and RVNAF and which is under continuing joint MAAG-GVN refinement. Following MAAG insistence, the Civil Guard was finally transferred from the Department of Interior to the Department of Defense allowing MAP and MAAG advisory support. Likewise,

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[2] A copy of this 29-page report, dated September 1, is part of a packet of documents entitled "South Vietnam Information Folder," dated October 23. (*Ibid.*, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878, Internal Security 1961)

[3] These three papers, all undated, are also part of the "South Vietnam Information Folder" cited in footnote 2 above.

[4] A copy of this 426-page treatise, originally published November 10 and 15, 1960, and subsequently published in four revisions—on January 18, 1961, May 1, 1961, October 1, 1961, and February 10, 1962, was given by General McGarr to the Department of State in 1964 and deposited in the Saigon Embassy Files cited in footnote 2 above. On the inside front cover is the following undated inscription signed by McGarr's successor as MAAG Chief, Charles J. Timmes: "Copy Number 2 presented to Lionel C. McGarr, Lt. Gen., USA (Ret.), who was the originator and driving force behind the production of this treatise and one of its principal authors."

certain U.S. military support and MAAG advice for the Self Defense Corps has also been authorized. During the year, heartening improvement was made in Navy, Marine and Air Force operations as well as in logistical capabilities throughout all three services. Also, although significant problem areas in implementation still remain, many of the military recommendations in the U.S. Counter-Insurgency Plan have been approved by GVN edict such as a single chain of command and the establishment of Field Command with its three subordinate tactical corps. Of course, as mentioned previously, much of importance remains to be done, not only with respect to new innovations, but also in the all important areas of urgency, implementation and follow through. As MAAG has no command authority, this is quite difficult. For example, the single chain of command has been too much downgraded by continuing Presidential insistence on retaining the Province Chief in the military chain of command and supporting him against higher military commanders in purely military matters. This problem will be further discussed in a later paragraph.

Since my September year end report, significant and revealing trends which were beginning to emerge have since further materialized. The most indicative is the recently accelerated infiltration and build up of Viet Cong strength, particularly in the northern and central sections of South Vietnam. The sparsely settled and rugged jungle terrain along the VN–Lao border make it exceedingly difficult to stop or materially slow down Communist infiltration from North Vietnam through Laos. Positive hard intelligence on infiltration of personnel from North Vietnam, especially accurate numbers, has been difficult to obtain as our intelligence is necessarily based on GVN reports with whatever verification can be gotten from our MAAG advisors with tactical and intelligence units. Although as you know, MAAG under its present staffing and current terms of reference cannot function as an intelligence evaluating or producing agency, reports from American intelligence agencies, plus circumstantial evidence when correlated with known events reasonably establishes a high degree of infiltration as a fact. The current fairly firm estimate of regular, numerically designated Viet Cong units in Vietnam is approximately 17,000 as compared with an estimated 7,500 upon my arrival fourteen months ago. This force in itself, not considering the additional Communist capability due to their build up in Laos, is capable of selective large scale operations in South Vietnam. This capability is significantly increased by Communist control of the terrain along the Lao–SVN border and intelligence indications that the Viet Cong are "regularizing" and reorganizing territorial units within South Vietnam.

The Viet Cong initiative in September in both the north and central areas—I and II Corps Zones—gave further testimony of this infiltration capability. In marked contrast to the previous comparatively low level of Viet Cong activities in these areas, the September attacks were larger and more numerous. October has been deceptively quiet in both I and II Corps as far as large scale attacks are concerned but political and subversive incidents have risen sharply. In September, Viet Cong activities included at least a dozen attacks by units reported by ARVN in strengths of from 300 to 500 each. The attacks in Kontum Province on 1 September were made by a force estimated by ARVN and our advisor on the ground as three "battalions" totalling 1,000 personnel (Viet Cong battalions vary from 100 to 600). These troops were reportedly much better trained and equipped than any previously encountered and the attacks were executed with considerable professional skill. Although they overran small isolated Civil Guard posts, relieving ARVN troops, in most cases, inflicted comparable casualties in return for casualties suffered. During this same period, Viet Cong armed activity in the southern or Delta region continued at a normal high level with, however, a significant increase in political and subversive activity. Furthermore, the major portion of the Viet Cong forces, about 10,000, are located in this region and they are considered the best trained and best equipped of the Viet Cong regular forces.

Considering the currently identified regular Viet Cong forces in the country, they have the capability of increasing both the frequency and magnitude of their attacks. These attacks may well be coordinated to a greater degree, but will more probably follow the present pattern of hit and run, with the limited objective of further weakening government control. If, however, infiltration continues to accelerate significantly, it may well indicate that the Communists have stepped up their timetable and plan to move into a larger scale, more conventional campaign designed to conquer a portion or all of South Vietnam. The "National Front Liberation of South Vietnam" has announced its intent of seizing and holding an enclave in South Vietnam, declaring it a liberated area and establishing a government which would then be quickly recognized as "legal" by the Soviet bloc. That they have not yet been able to accomplish this indicates the "Front" has not yet gained adequate political or military strength to overcome the GVN military capability here.

As the Viet Cong offensive is multi-pronged, I believe it very important that our officials at all policy and decision making levels be fully current on the inter play and effect of the application of all elements of national power by both sides on the overall pacification effort here. Currently, the main emphasis is in the military field because of the advanced development of the insurgency. However,

as MAAG has spelled out in the military section of the Counter-Insurgency Plan and in its Tactics and Techniques of Counter-Insurgent Operations treatise, military action alone, even though successful, is not the answer and can even be counterproductive if not preceded and followed by coordinated interlocking political, psychological and economic action in consonance with an overall National Plan. Without the development and employment of a politico-military-paramilitary infrastructure to secure militarily cleared areas for the GVN, the Viet Cong will move back as ARVN forces, of necessity, go to new missions. Of course, this has an adverse psychological impact on the population. Military successes of June–July–August have been dissipated by GVN failure to follow through and truly reassert and maintain government control. This control and reconstruction phase can only be accomplished by the civil authorities with the help of the paramilitary forces. I am convinced that a concerted effort at US-GVN level is absolutely necessary if President Diem and the GVN are to develop the required National Plan together with an adequate Intelligence Organization and a working control and coordination framework in which all governmental elements including the military can operate in a meaningful and effective manner. The GVN excuse that they do not have sufficient trained leadership must not be allowed to postpone the implementation of these required actions. Otherwise, the military will continue to be held responsible, both in Vietnam and in our country, for failure to obtain and capitalize on desired and timely results which, acting alone it cannot hope to achieve.

Although increasing emphasis on military planning and combat operations is certainly in order, additional measures other than military are required to motivate the people to resist Viet Cong blandishments and terrorist methods to the point of actively assisting the government's counter-insurgency efforts. The inability of the GVN to protect the lives of the people in far flung villages is, of course, an important factor. Also, the population must be induced through political, economic and psychological measures to support the GVN with greater patriotic ardor than now appears evident. For example, General "Big" Minh, Commanding General of Field Command, reported to General Taylor that the RVNAF is receiving progressively less cooperation from the villagers in the matter of information on Viet Cong presence and activities. This could be the result of governmental relations with the people. Also, it could be the result of the impact of Viet Cong initiative in the north following so closely upon the ARVN initiative and successes in the Delta. Whatever the cause, it again emphasizes the need for an adequate overall GVN organization which will operate from the top levels to the villages and hamlets to properly counter the insurgency.

Until this is accomplished, military operations can, at best, result in a series of isolated and temporary victories. I have repeatedly and forcefully urged in my letters and in conversations with both President Diem and Secretary of Defense Thuan the necessity for the development of a National Level Operations Plan into which a Military Operations Plan can be integrated. Such a plan must include at all appropriate levels an adequate Command/Control Structure such as agencies subordinate to the National Internal Security Council designed to dynamically apply all elements of national power in proper combination—economic, political and psychological, as well as military. In this respect, although the National Internal Security Council has been established by Presidential Decree, it is not yet functioning in its intended role.

At MAAG's urging, "Big" Minh's Field Command, the headquarters charged with planning and executing the military phase of the counter-insurgency effort, is now developing the military portion of such a plan. While the plan needs to be coordinated on a geographically phased "amoeba principle" starting with the clearance of various key areas and expanding these areas until the entire country is covered, MAAG does not feel this plan should or could be prepared on a rigid or mechanical time schedule basis. Because of the advanced state of the insurgency and because of the limited forces available to counter it, I feel that an inflexible timetable approach would be unrealistic. As indicated in the paper Lansdale will furnish you, MAAG has prepared an outline for a National Geographically Phased Operations Plan which it is hoped will assist in furthering the military effort and could serve as a point of departure for GVN planning in this area. In addition, MAAG currently has representation on a Saigon Task Force committee which is now writing such an overall National Plan for presentation to the GVN.

Military morale continues to be a problem stemming from GVN failure to properly plan and organize their counter-insurgency effort. Slow promotion, low pay in the lower grades, charges of political favoritism, unavoidable long separation from families due to necessarily extended operational troop commitment, poor family housing and the like no doubt have an adverse affect on soldier and officer morale. Although some of these are normal soldier "gripes" which in most cases can and are being remedied, the import of this situation is not discounted here. However, I feel a more serious morale problem lies in a deep sense of frustration caused primarily by too often seeing hard won victories watered down by inadequate civil-military follow through measures which allow the Viet Cong to regain control in areas after clearance by military action.

As noted previously, another critical problem hampering the GVN in its pacification effort is the serious lack of hard and timely intelligence. This results from the uncoordinated condition of the presently established GVN intelligence community. Although, of course, MAAG is primarily concerned with instructional advice and assistance in the military intelligence field, we have repeatedly pointed out to the GVN that the present fragmentation of the overall countrywide intelligence effort into several unrelated and uncoordinated civil and military agencies will not answer the requirement in a situation where the value of information is measured in minutes and hours. In response to MAAG and Country Team urging for central intelligence control and direction in the Counter-Insurgency Plan, President Diem created the Central Intelligence Organization. However, at present this organization has neither the personnel nor the charter to do the job and there now appears to be some doubt that Diem actually intends that centralized control and direction of intelligence be vested in one organization. Apparently, he does not feel he has a suitable man or that he can trust any one official to this degree. However, despite the problems facing the GVN, some method of obtaining adequate, timely, grass roots level intelligence must be developed if the Viet Cong is to be defeated.

With respect to MAAG's all important mission of guiding RVNAF training, a Master Training Plan designed to overcome the long standing situation of units being inadequately trained due to continuing operational commitments has been developed jointly with RVNAF. This plan is a sound and logical extension of the improvements in the training effort here which has, during the past year, been fully reoriented on counter-guerrilla operations and ranger type training as well. In addition to regular ARVN units including the 20,000 and 30,000 increases, this plan is also designed to train the Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps. As previously mentioned, the Civil Guard was formerly under the Department of Interior where they received limited police type instruction and the Self Defense Corps, for all practical purposes, received no military training. As you know, over two years ago this insurgency had developed far beyond the capability of normal police type law enforcement. Since the transfer of the Civil Guard to DOD, ARVN, with MAAG guidance has trained these units to the full extent possible considering operational commitment, time and facilities which, of course, leaves much to be desired. Their training schedules have been most carefully worked out and repeatedly reviewed to ensure at least adequate training in the shortest possible time. I feel that the Civil Guard is currently receiving a minimum amount of training consistent with developing an acceptable capability to perform their mission and that to further reduce training time could well result in a

"paper trained" force not capable of success against the Viet Cong. Provided MAAG's Master Training Program is not further cut by directive and can be followed, all ARVN units, including the 20,000 and 30,000 force increases, plus the Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps will be developed into a trained force within the shortest possible time consistent with local conditions, facilities and necessary heavy operational commitments.

Considering the language barrier and personnel requirements, I am convinced that the worldwide MAAG concept of teaching indigenous personnel to act as instructors rather than "face to face" training by U.S. personnel is certainly the soundest way to build a strong, viable, self sufficient Armed Force in the host countries. For this reason, MAAG has resisted sporadic pressures here beamed at Americans running all training centers and schools. In this respect, the shortage of ARVN officers to act as instructors could be somewhat alleviated by calling back the large number of officers now on non-military assignments. To speed training, additional MAAG advisors have been requisitioned. This will also allow us to do a better job of teaching the RVNAF to stand on its own feet as the Army of a sovereign nation should do.

As you know, General Taylor and his group have proposed a series of actions designed to further assist the GVN in countering the insurgency while concurrently coping with the floods in the Delta area.[5] MAAG, in association with the other U.S. agencies here is now working out coordinated positions and recommendations for implementation of these proposals.

One of the actions under study is the matter of blocking infiltration from Laos into the high plateau area. Currently MAAG has finally induced ARVN to combine small, inefficient static border posts into larger mobile patrol bases and to build light plane strips in some areas along the border. Presently, ARVN does operate clandestine cross border patrols from five blocking units astride main penetration routes. . . . Also, over a year ago, when I found that the borders could not be sealed by political action, I proposed to President Diem that a "cordon sanitaire" be established along the entire land border of South Vietnam. General Taylor's proposal for a Border Force to be organized from existing ranger units trained and equipped for prolonged service along the border zone is similar in many respects to the MAAG concept which Lansdale will furnish you. The major difference is that the MAAG plan did not envision GVN forces operating regularly or deeply on the Lao side of the border. Also, the Taylor group proposals envision that all elements of this force be completely under military control. As no purely

[5] See Document 190.

military action can completely seal the border, I feel our planners and policy makers should understand that presently contemplated action can do no more than reduce the present rate of infiltration. Therefore, I believe that intensified action at our highest diplomatic levels should be continued toward a workable border control arrangement not only with Laos, but with Cambodia as well.

A most significant proposal by the Taylor group is the introduction of U.S. military forces—to be accomplished, at least initially—under a cover plan centered around the present flood conditions in the Delta.* This plan envisions service type troops as part of a Flood Relief Task Force which, over an extended period of time would assist the GVN in rehabilitation of the area. For the protection of these units, U.S. combat troops would also be committed here. I fully recognize the advantages, for psychological as well as military reasons, of establishing a U.S. military presence in Vietnam. As you know, as recently as last spring, MAAG recommended a brigade task force of at least two Battle Groups be committed here as "school troops" to assist in speeding up ARVN training. At that time, considering the level of Viet Cong activity in the I and II Corps areas where it was planned to station them, it was felt that these two battle groups, provided they were not fragmented into small isolated packages, could perform their mission without becoming heavily involved in fighting the Viet Cong. Later, due to increased Viet Cong activity, MAAG recommended that if U.S. combat troops were to be introduced for the primary purpose of freeing ARVN fighting units, which would then result in their becoming involved in counter-guerrilla warfare, a strength of two divisions, suitably reinforced with combat, logistic and air support would be required initially. Provided U.S. combat troops are to be used solely to protect U.S. logistic units in the flood area, three battle groups are considered adequate. However, I am now convinced that unless deployed in sufficient strength the Viet Cong, both for military and propaganda reasons, will eventually consider U.S. troops a prime target. Of course, I have no doubt that American troops will fully live up to their traditions if forced to fight. However, it is important that combat troops sent here be specially trained and equipped for counter-guerrilla warfare, that they come expecting to fight and that they be prepared for extended commitment. Most important of all, it is essential that these forces be totally under U.S. command and that command and control relationships, support and other arrangements such as a status of forces agreement and the like be fully agreed between the two governments prior to and not after their arrival.

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* See Document 191

A joint survey of the security situation at the Provincial level has been proposed by the Taylor group and accepted by the GVN. This is a logical and forward looking extension of a recently obtained joint MAAG-GVN agreement to inspect Province Chiefs' security arrangements at all installations employing ARVN units. The proposed joint survey is of particular interest to MAAG because of the previously mentioned "dual position" of Province Chiefs with respect to the military and political chain of command and because of the importance of working out improved civil-military cooperation at Province level.

One of the basic conclusions reached during my initial assessment of the military situation in September 1960, was the absolute necessity for a single, inviolate chain of command. In addition to previous recommendations, the necessity for the reorganization of the command structure of the RVNAF and for the establishment of a single chain of command was spelled out in the Counter-Insurgency Plan. A significant degree of success was achieved when a Presidential Decree, and the subsequent implementing directive, enacted most of the MAAG recommendations. While this decree did not remove the Province Chief from the military chain of command, it is the most workable solution obtainable at this time. This is because Diem, who personally selects his Province Chiefs and holds them in high regard, desires that these officials retain a high degree of control. Of the thirty-eight Province Chiefs in Vietnam, all but six are military officers and are supposedly under tactical zone (divisional) commanders for military operations involving any significant number of ARVN troops. For this reason, although their military qualifications vary greatly, Diem feels that for all practical purposes, the military chain of command is now satisfied. However, in actual fact, this is not entirely true.

It is hoped that the proposed joint survey can be used as a vehicle to remedy this situation as it cannot be rectified by the military alone. Because of the dual role of the Province Chief and his "direct line" to the highest civil levels of the government, it will be necessary for the political member of the survey group to insist on corrective action.

Other Taylor group proposals which are primarily in the nature of measures to improve intelligence and further improve RVNAF mobility are now being staffed as priority matters. These actions present no particular problem except that with respect to intelligence a change in MAAG terms of reference may be required.

In conclusion, this report has been frank and objective with emphasis on what remains to be done rather than the very significant improvements which we have made over the past year. Naturally, our progress is due in large part to the fine cooperation and

support of CINCPAC and all agencies throughout the Department of Defense. Again, our position here is complicated primarily by lack of authority to direct the GVN to take proper politico-military measures which will adequately coordinate the overall counter-insurgency effort from the viewpoint of required political-military-economic-psychological actions. For the above reasons, I feel that these interlocking military-political actions need heavy pressure from our political side if they are to be accomplished adequately and in time.

Sincerely,

Lionel C. McGarr
Lieutenant General, USA

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201. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, October 31, 1961—4 p.m.

575. Task Force VN. Our conversations over past ten days with Vietnamese in various walks of life show virtually unanimous desire for introduction US forces into Viet-Nam. This based on unsolicited remarks from Cabinet Ministers, National Assembly Deputies, university professors, students, shopkeepers, and oppositionists. Dr. Tran Dinh De, level-headed Minister of Health, told Embassy officer Oct 29 that while GVN could continue resist Communists for while longer if US troops not introduced, it could not win alone against Commies. National Assembly members, according to . . . unanimously in favor entry US forces. Diem told us while Gen Taylor was here that he had consulted National Assembly committee on this question and had received favorable response. Even an oppositionist like ex-Foreign Minister Tran Van Do has told us US forces are needed and is apparently so strongly convinced of this that he did not suggest any condition precedent about political changes by Diem. AmConsul Hue reports that opinion among intellectuals and government officials in that city is also almost unanimously in favor of introduction of American combat troops. MAAG believes on basis private conversations and general attitude Vietnamese military per-

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/10-3161. Secret; Priority. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd, Manila for General Taylor, Bangkok, Geneva for FECON, Vientiane, Phnom Penh, London, Paris, Ottawa, New Delhi, and Hue.

sonnel toward US that Vietnamese armed forces would likewise welcome introduction US forces.

General Vietnamese desire for introduction US forces arises from serious morale decline among populace during recent weeks because of deterioration in security and horrible death through torture and mutilation to which Col Nam subjected. Expanded VC infiltration has brought fully home to Vietnamese that fact that US has not intervened militarily in Laos to come to rescue of anti-Communists. Now that they see Viet-Nam approaching its own crucial period, paramount question in their minds is whether US will give armed support to anti-Communist GVN or whether it will back down when chips are down. Vietnamese thus want US forces introduced in order to demonstrate US determination to stick it out with them against Communists. They do not want to be victims of political settlement with Communists. This is especially true of those publicly identified as anti-Communist like Dean Vu Quoc Thuc who collaborated with Dr. Eugene Staley on joint experts report. [2]

Most Vietnamese whose thoughts on this subject have been developed are not thinking in terms of US troops to fight guerrillas but rather of a reassuring presence of US forces in Viet-Nam. These persons undoubtedly feel, however that if war in Viet-Nam continues to move toward overt conventional aggression as opposed to its guerrilla character, combat role for US troops could eventually arise.

Nolting

[2] See Document 93

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202. Memorandum From Robert H. Johnson of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) [1]

Washington, October 31, 1961.

SUBJECT

Planning for Viet Nam

I have prepared this memorandum to give you the current picture of Washington planning relating to Viet Nam and to deal

[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series. Top Secret. Copies were sent to Rostow, Smith, Ewell, and Parrott.

more specifically with the matters General Taylor mentioned in his 626 from Bangkok.[2]

I. The State of Washington Planning

Military Planning

As part of the preparation for General Taylor's trip a series of papers were prepared in Defense[3] briefly discussing twenty different military measures, short of the introduction of large U.S. combat troop units, that might be undertaken in Viet Nam. At the same time that General Taylor left, the Joint Staff began its own analysis of these twenty proposals. The results of the Joint Staff's work were to be submitted to the JCS on Monday.[4] Some of this work has a bearing on certain of General Taylor's recommendations. In particular, as indicated below, the question of lift, including helicopters, has been caught up in this study.

Turning now to General Taylor's recommendations, much of the staff work involved is being done in the field. General Taylor's message No. 625 from Bangkok[5] outlined the work that was to be done by him and by the Country Team in South Viet Nam. Apart from the Joint Staff exercise already mentioned Washington planning has concentrated primarily on General Taylor's principal proposal—a military flood relief task force. The Pentagon is engaged in a review of a troop list for such an operation prepared by the MAAG in Viet Nam. It generally agrees with the MAAG's proposals which envisage engineering construction units (including roadbuilding units), a hospital task force, two helicopter companies, small boat units, etc. It has also examined such questions as the problem of the Geneva Accords and the need for a status of forces agreement.

There are two interrelated questions that seem to be causing some considerable difficulty to Washington agencies in thinking about General Taylor's concept:

a. General Taylor has stated that combat troops would be included in the task force for protection of relief operations. He also envisages that the flood relief task force would constitute a military reserve in the event of a heightened crisis. He has stated in addition however, that the flood relief task force concept is not intended as a cover for introduction of combat troops. Many in Washington are convinced that the longer the forces remained in Viet Nam, the more they would come under attack and the more they would become involved in combat. If we do not intend to be forced out of SEA altogether, there is real doubt as to whether, once we committed

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[2] Document 197.
[3] Document 168.
[4] Apparently a reference to October 30.
[5] Printed as telegram 146, Document 196.

forces, we could withdraw them until reasonable security had been restored in Viet Nam.

b. There is some question as to whether General Taylor intends that the task force will remain in Viet Nam only long enough to do the immediate relief and rehabilitation job or whether it will stay on to engage in reconstruction activities. There is some evidence that suggests that General Taylor's intention is the latter for he refers in various messages to their staying for "an extended period" and for "a matter at least of months".

This question is related to the one above for, as has been stated, the longer the troops remain, the more they are likely to become involved in combat operations. This uncertainty also poses problems for the AID aspects of such a relief program. The estimates from the USOM that are still awaited will apparently cover only immediate relief and rehabilitation needs and will not cover reconstruction requirements.

Political Planning

A political and diplomatic plan developed by Ben Wood, the Deputy Task Force Director, for Alexis Johnson has attempted to solve these two problems by approaching the operation on a two stage basis.* Wood's paper suggests that, for the immediate purpose of dealing with the flood, a U.S. force of 1500 made up of two helicopter companies, a 500-man Navy landing craft unit and a 500-man logistic support unit be sent to Viet Nam. These units would be entirely for flood relief operations, would have no combat-unit support, would be prepared to defend themselves, but would move out of an area if attacked. We would justify their introduction entirely on the basis of relief needs. We would temporarily hold back the Jorden report on North Viet Nam's activities in South Viet Nam since it would not be relevant to the justification of this operation. We would also argue that as a relief operation, our activities did not constitute a breach of the Geneva Accords.

The paper argues that the introduction of a large force—say 10,000—would require a prior decision that we were prepared if necessary to go on to a much larger, presumably SEATO, operation. The paper proposes that the President send a letter to Diem in which he would say that the commitment of U.S. troops to security operations would be conditional upon GVN performance on a whole series of measures on which we have been long attempting to obtain action.

This approach is designed in part to solve some of the timing dilemmas by which we are now faced. It would simplify the problem for the Nehru visit by temporarily by-passing the Geneva Accords question and would permit immediate action to deal with

* Document 195

the flood while giving more time to consider the tougher questions involved in sending larger military units. By sorting out the two elements involved in General Taylor's proposal, it does tend to weaken one of the principal advantages of that proposal. General Taylor's recommendation would permit creation of a base for a subsequent direct U.S. military contribution to the handling of the security problem while temporarily avoiding some of the political disadvantages of intervention and giving us at least some continuing freedom of action on commitment to combat operations.

I do agree, however, that in making a decision on the Taylor proposal we need to face and to decide in principle the question of whether we are prepared, if necessary, to step up very considerably our military commitment in Viet Nam. If we commit 6–8000 troops and then pull them out when the going got rough we will be finished in Viet Nam and probably in all of Southeast Asia.

Economic Planning and Financing

A final area to which some thought has been given is the financing of a relief and rehabilitation operation. I attended a meeting in State on Monday on this subject.* Some action was taken a week or more ago to provide immediate rice supplies, to offer additional such supplies and to provide medicine. Washington, however, is still waiting for the Country Team's long-promised list of other requirements. The list should be received within the next few days; as a result of my suggestion a message will be sent to Saigon to ensure that we have at least some preliminary estimates by the end of the week so that something will be available when General Taylor's recommendations are considered.

Since the Country Team estimates are expected to cover only relief and rehabilitation, it is believed that they will present no serious funding problems. A reconstruction program could be much more expensive and would probably pose real problems, including the possible necessity for some kind of supplemental aid appropriation. The recommendation to the President will probably take the form of a proposal that he simply decide in principle that this is a priority operation and that necessary funds will be provided to finance it.

I have been assured by both State and Defense and they are keeping informed of each other's planning. I also raised at the meeting Monday the question of whether we could be sure that USOM's planning of flood relief requirements would be carefully related to the composition of the military task force that the MAAG had proposed; if we were going to send highway engineers we

*No other record of this meeting has been found.

would, for example, need also to provide for road and bridge repair materials. Although there was some indication that some others present considered this a potential problem, the general view seemed to be that we must assume that the different parts of the Country Team would coordinate their work.

II. General Taylor's Recommendations for Immediate Action

The first of General Taylor's recommendations for immediate action in his message of last Friday[8] was for a survey of the flood problem, perhaps by a team of experts from the U.S. As I have told you, before this message was received State had prepared a message suggesting that George Tanham head a MAAG–USOM group to make this study. That proposal was killed on Saturday by Alexis Johnson. Instead a more general message asking Saigon whether they needed any help on this problem was apparently sent. The answer, we are told, was that no help was required, that the Country Team could do the job.[9] However, these messages are not available outside of the State Department and it was not clear whether they referred specifically to General Taylor's proposal. At the meeting on Monday morning I was assured by State and Defense representatives that the MAAG and USOM did indeed have all the experts required. However, with some difficulty I did obtain the apparent agreement of State people on Monday afternoon that they would send a message to Saigon which would refer specifically to General Taylor's proposal and request embassy views.

The situation with respect to the 64 helicopters is rather complex. As indicated earlier, the entire question of requirements for short-take-off-and-landing (STOL) aircraft and helicopters is being studied by the Joint Staff as a single problem. An estimate of two companies (44 helicopters), furnished earlier by CINCPAC, is included in this study. These 44 helicopters were intended solely for the purpose of providing greater mobility to the Vietnamese army. General Taylor's concept envisaged use of helicopters for flood relief purposes as well. It is not clear to DoD how the new MAAG estimate of 64 helicopters to which General Taylor referred in his Friday message is related to the previous requirement for 44. Since there are already nineteen helicopters in Viet Nam, it was considered possible that no further addition was intended. At the other extreme, the entire 64 might be intended as a separate flood relief require-

[8] Apparently a reference to Document 196.

[9] The messages under reference are telegram 509 to Saigon, October 28, and telegram 563 from Saigon, October 29 (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/10–2861 and 751K.00/10–2961).

ment. At my urging the Pentagon has agreed to send a message to MAAG seeking clarification.

Supplying these helicopters is going to require a Presidential decision for at least two reasons: (a) it will involve a judgment that the risks involved in taking them from other units in the continental U.S. or in the Pacific are acceptable; and (b) if they are to be used in support of GVN army operations, a clear-cut violation of the Geneva Accords will be involved. DoD apparently has decided in principle that the 44 can be provided, but the Services and overseas commands are going to scream when helicopters are taken away from them. I have urged that a decision be sought to get the helicopters earmarked and pre-positioned. I will pursue this aspect of the matter further today.

As the above indicates, it is very difficult for Washington to get into the act very effectively until it has been exposed in much more detail to General Taylor's thinking. He has promised specific recommendations on November 1.

If you have an opportunity at the Planning Lunch today [10] you might wish to pursue the following questions with Alexis Johnson: (a) The need for help from outside the MAAG and USOM in surveying the flood problem and actions to deal with it; (b) Whether the President must not address himself to the broader question of how far we intend to go in providing military support to Viet Nam when he considers the Taylor recommendation for a flood relief task force; and (c) How we deal with Nehru on the question of the Geneva Accords. I just don't see how we can by-pass this last problem if we intend to accept the Taylor recommendations as we now understand them. (*No* reference should be made to the Wood paper. The copy I have is a bootleg copy and is still being considered by A. Johnson.)

RHJ

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[10] No record of the Planning Group luncheon meeting on October 31 was found.

203. Memorandum From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Lemnitzer) to the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) [1]

CM-414-61 *Washington, October 31, 1961.*

SUBJECT

Support for Vietnam

1. Reference is made to CINCPAC message, DTG 180444Z October 1961,[2] wherein Admiral Felt recommended several U.S. military actions that should be taken at once in Vietnam short of introducing combat troops. Of the four air support actions (photo reconnaissance, T-28 augmentation, Jungle Jim, and helicopter support), implementing measures have been initiated except for the deployment of two U.S. Army Helicopter Companies.

2. In view of the deteriorating situation in Vietnam, a general increase in mobility capabilities is an urgent requirement. As an immediate measure, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have agreed that the deployment of two U.S. Army Helicopter Companies with maintenance detachments should be accomplished without delay. Specifically, two companies of H-21 type helicopters were approved in conference with Admiral Felt on 27 October.[3] With timely authorization for this action, the units could be transported by the U.S. carrier now expected to depart from the West Coast about 15 November with the T-28 aircraft augmentation for Vietnam.

3. U.S. Army personnel for these units would total 412, with 40 H-21 and 4 H-13 helicopters. Preferably, these units should operate as U.S. military units, with U.S. aircraft markings and the personnel in military uniforms. Operations would be conducted as directed by the Chief, MAAG, Vietnam.

4. In view of a favorable reaction by Mr. U. Alexis Johnson in discussing this proposal with Admiral Felt on 26 October,[4] a draft implementing message has been made available to your office and Mr. Johnson's office.[5]

5. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend urgent consideration and approval for deployment of the two helicopter companies so that the

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OASD/ISA Files: FRC 64 A 2382, Vietnam 092 Jan.-Oct. 1961. Top Secret.

[2] Dated October 18. (*Ibid.*, RG 319, HQDA Message Center Microfilm, Reel 10584)

[3] No record was found of this conference.

[4] No record was found of this discussion.

[5] Attached to the source text, but not printed.

movement to Vietnam can be accomplished by the carrier departing about 15 November 1961.[6]

L.L. Lemnitzer[7]

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[6] In a memorandum of October 31 to Lemnitzer, Brigadier General George S. Brown, Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, wrote that McNamara had suggested that "maximum advantage be taken of the time between now and a decision on this and other actions incident to Vietnam, following General Taylor's report to the President" and that such advantage should be gained "through initiation of all actions possible on the assumption that the recommendations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff will be approved." (Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OASD/ISA Files: FRC 64 A 2382, Vietnam 092 Jan.–Oct. 1961)

[7] Printed from a copy that bears this stamped signature.

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204. Telegram From the United States Delegation at Hakone to the Department of State[1]

Hakone, November 1, 1961—5 p.m.

Secto 6. Since General Taylor may give first full report prior my return, believe special attention should be given to critical question whether Diem is prepared take necessary measures to give us something worth supporting. If Diem unwilling trust military commanders to get job done and take steps to consolidate non-Communist elements into serious national effort, difficult to see how relative handful American troops can have decisive influence. While attaching greatest possible importance to security in Southeast Asia, I would be reluctant see US make major additional commitment American prestige to a losing horse. Suggest Department carefully review all measures we expect from Diem if our assistance forces us to assume de facto direction Vietnamese affairs.[2]

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11–161. Secret; Limit Distribution. Another copy of the telegram indicates that Rusk was the sole drafter (*Ibid.*, Conference Files: Lot 65 D 366, CF 1984) Printed also in *Pentagon Papers, Gravel Edition*, vol. II, p. 105. The Secretary was in Hakone, along with other Cabinet members, to take part in the first meeting of the Joint U.S.–Japan Committee on Trade and Economic Affairs, November 2–4.

[2] The following draft handwritten reply is written at the bottom of the source text: "Dept will make suggested review as precondition committing US troops to Vietnam. CBW UAJ."

205. Editorial Note

In telegrams 5 and 6 from Baguio, November 1, Taylor presented to the President a summary of the conclusions of his mission and his reasons for recommending the introduction of a United States military force of approximately 8,000 into South Vietnam. These telegrams are printed in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pages 331–342.

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206. Memorandum From the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Felt), to the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) [1]

Honolulu, November 2, 1961.

1. This is in response to your questions concerning interdiction of North Vietnam capabilities for aggression. [2]

2. An intelligence appreciation is contained in enclosure (1). [3] From this kind of appreciation we derive our target criteria and lists which are worked out in detail for use by strike forces.

3. Strike operations which we have in mind can be graduated dependent on the politico/military objectives which are determined for us. We pay particular attention to DRV military forces, their operational bases, support and control installations and lines of communications. We are prepared also to take out selected industrial-economic targets. We have selected areas for mining so as to shut off the sea approaches to Haiphong and the mouth of the Red River. Target lists are comprehensive, thus permitting specific objectives for several modes of attack.

4. Here are some of the possibilities for which we are prepared:

a. Air

(1) Conduct air reconnaissance flights over North Vietnam.

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-015-69. Top Secret. A note on the source text indicates that copies were also sent to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other Pacific commands. The Taylor Mission stopped briefly at CINCPAC headquarters on November 2 en route to Washington.

[2] See Document 170.

[3] This 15-page untitled and undated paper is not printed.

(2) Conduct fighter sweeps along roads and railroads in North Vietnam to destroy military supplies destined to support Viet Cong insurgents in South Vietnam.

(3) Harass DRV communist aircraft supplying communist insurgent forces in Vietnam by U.S. fighter aircraft.

(4) Destroy DRV communist aircraft flying supplies to Viet Cong insurgents.

(5) Attack singly but progressively key military targets in North Vietnam.

(6) Drop raiding parties for sabotage, and to disrupt LOC's.

(7) Conduct aerial mine laying operations.

b. Sea

(1) Mine approaches to Haiphong.

(2) Sink large ship in Haiphong Channel.

(3) Blockade DRV shipping and fishing vessels. Degree and areas of blockade to progress from less severe to more severe.

(4) Destroy DRV military naval craft which oppose U.S. maritime action.

(5) Conduct small amphibious raids.

(6) Conduct naval gunfire on key coastal targets.

(7) Conduct underwater demolition team raids (UDT) from surface ships or submarines for beach reconnaissance and beach attacks along the coast of North Vietnam.

c. Land

(1) Introduce raiding parties into North Vietnam overland by infiltration by sea or air drop. Missions to include:

(a) Raids to destroy command posts, bridges, facilities, etc.

(b) Ambushes to harass and/or destroy vehicles, patrols, and supply columns.

Resp'y

H.D. Felt

207. Memorandum From Senator Mansfield to the President [1]

Washington, November 2, 1961.

SUBJECT

The Vietnamese and Southeast Asian Situation

In view of the fact that General Maxwell Taylor is due to report to you shortly and also because of the type of stories which are beginning to appear in the press and based on interviews, speculations, etc., I thought that with all respect, I should make my views known to you on this most important, delicate and dangerous situation. Hence, this memorandum.

The question of the possibility of sending American troops to Viet Nam has occurred a number of times in the past. First, in 1954, at the time of the battle of Dienbienphu, then last May, when the Vice President made his visit to Southeast Asia, and most recently, on the occasion of General Maxwell Taylor's visit to Viet Nam. In my opinion, this is a matter which should be approached with the greatest caution.

On several occasions we have made commitments to use our own troops, while the Russians have carefully avoided using theirs. The sending of American armed forces to Viet Nam may be the wrong way and probably would be, in present circumstances. In the first place, we would be engaged without the support of significant allies. Our troops would be engaged by third-string communist forces (North Vietnamese). Then, they could very well become engaged against the second-string—the Chinese Communists, who might be drawn into the fray and could out-match us and our Asian allies many times in manpower. If American combat units land in Viet Nam, it is conceivable that the Chinese Communists would do the same. With shorter lines of communication and transportation, with much more manpower available, South Viet Nam, on that basis, could become a quicksand for us. Where does an involvement of this kind end even if we can bring it to a successful conclusion? In the environs of Saigon? At the 17th parallel? At Hanoi? At Canton? At Peking? Any involvement on the mainland of Asia would seem to me to weaken our military capability in Berlin and Germany and, again, leave the Russians uncommitted.

It appears to me that the presence of American combat troops in South Viet Nam could be misinterpreted in the minds of millions of Southeast Asians and could well be considered as a revival of

[1] Source: University of Montana, Mansfield Papers, Series XXII, Box 103, Folder 16. Confidential.

colonial force. Moreover, we must be extremely wary of any seemingly simple solution that would have Asian SEATO nations do the intervening at our behest to avoid this appearance. If we give them the go-ahead, then there is every likelihood that we shall have to follow militarily or if we do not, we will suffer disastrous repercussions throughout all of Asia and we will indeed become the laughing stock of the world.

While Viet Nam is very important, we cannot hope to substitute armed power for the kind of political and economic social changes that offer the best resistance to communism. If the necessary reforms have not been forthcoming over the past seven years to stop communist subversion and rebellion, then I do not see how American combat troops can do it today. I would wholeheartedly favor, if necessary and feasible, a substantial increase of American military and economic aid to Viet Nam, but leave the responsibility of carrying the physical burden of meeting communist infiltration, subversion, and attack on the shoulders of the South Vietnamese, whose country it is and whose future is their chief responsibility.

It seems to me that Ngo Dinh Diem has seen the situation in this light in the past. He had almost an obsession with getting the French military out of Viet Nam and I find it somewhat difficult to believe that he is now anxious for American combat forces as a base for his continuance in power. This point, it seems to me, should be clarified before we commit combat forces or even underwrite a commitment of Asian SEATO forces. And it should be clarified in direct conversations between you and President Diem, not through intermediaries who might, from talks with lesser officials, reach the erroneous conclusion that it is Diem's view that such forces should be sent.

Our problem now is little different than it was in World War II and the years after: to minimize our involvement, particularly military, on the Asian mainland not to maximize it. In this connection, I must say that the antagonism towards Cambodia is most incomprehensible. That is our point of minimum involvement and cost in Southeast Asia and with a tolerable situation instead of alienating that country we ought to be seeking to create through diplomacy comparable situations of minimum involvement and cost.

Within the framework of the problem of minimizing rather than maximizing our involvement, I am convinced that we can do far more than we have done, by a judicious diplomacy and more effective aid in Viet Nam. I would repeat the recommendations which I made in an earlier memorandum, dated September 20, 1961:[2]

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[2] Not printed. (*Ibid.*)

(1) A Vietnamese foreign policy and propaganda program which hold out some hope of a unification of Viet Nam by means other than the sword;

(2) A vast, coordinated effort in the field of economic development which bears a Vietnamese hallmark and our name in small print no matter how much we may contribute to it;

(3) A rapid introduction of democratic practices at the village and provincial level;

(4) A dramatic and sincere effort to enlist Vietnamese intellectuals in all aspects of the government's activities, primarily by the lifting of the shroud of fear which hangs over political life in Saigon and by acceptance of a genuine opposition in the National Assembly;

(5) A campaign by Diem and his officials to develop close personal ties with the people by a continuous Johnson-like shirt-sleeve campaign from one end of the country to the other.

It is readily apparent that the changes listed above are preponderantly those which must be initiated and pursued by Diem and the Vietnamese government. The U.S. mission in Saigon, however, will be a most significant factor in the situation. The following suggestions may be useful in extracting from the mission its greatest possible contributions to the making of these changes:

(1) Appoint an Ambassador who is not a career-man but who is nevertheless knowledgeable in the affairs of the region. The post is one of high career risk and a scope of activity far broader than that normally associated with diplomatic relations. It is not the kind of job that can best be done by a regular foreign service officer or other careerist.

(2) Shake-up the entire U.S. establishment in Saigon and try to cut its size as rapidly as possible. It would be wise to bring fresh blood not only to the heads but to the bodies of the Embassy, the I.C.A., U.S.I.S., MAAG and the C.I.A. and get them out of Saigon and into the field.

(3) Establish a special unit in the State Department, responsible to you through the Secretary of State as the sole channel for the issuance of directives and the receipt of reports on Viet Nam for as long as the crisis continues. This would apply to directives and reports whether they involve the Embassy, MAAG, I.C.A., U.S.I.S. or whatever. This unit should be a planning and action body under your close control which supersedes the Far Eastern division of the Department insofar as Viet Nam is concerned. It should use that division rather than be used by it.

(4) In Saigon, the Ambassador should have full control over all activities of all agencies in fact as well as in theory. This means that he must be the sole channel for the receipt of directives and the dispatch of reports. Most of all, it means that he must have firm control over all contact with the Vietnamese government.

I would add, only, that in present circumstances, I would suggest the greatest reticence in the commitment of U.S. combat forces to Viet Nam or any commitment to underwrite, with our

military forces as a last resort, a military action throughout Southeast Asia by Asian SEATO forces. In present circumstances, it seems to me we must exercise every caution to avoid another Korean-type involvement on the Asian mainland. Such an involvement would appear to me to play completely into the hands of the Soviet Union, since it will get them off their present Chinese ideological hook and open all sorts of new prospects in the really decisive area of Germany and Europe. An involvement on our part can lead to four possible adverse results:

(1) A fan-fare and then a retreat.
(2) An indecisive and costly conflict along the Korean lines.
(3) A major war with China while Russia stands aside.
(4) A total world conflict.

Against these four adverse possible consequences, there is the bare possibility of one salutory outcome. U.S. combat forces (not SEATO allied forces) might provide that bare margin of effectiveness which would permit a solution of the guerrilla problem in South Viet Nam or prevent further encroachments southward—assuming of course that the Chinese Communists, let alone the Russians, do not become involved. Even then, we will have achieved a "victory" whose fruits, if we would conserve them, will cost us billions of dollars in military and aid expenditures over the years into the future.

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208. Telegram From the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (McGarr) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Lemnitzer)[1]

Saigon, November 2, 1961.

SGN 766. As views are expressed on military matters in recent cables as result of visit Taylor group, specifically Saigon Emtels to State 516, 540, 541, 545, 558,[2] wish to give MAAG comments on certain points of military significance. This is considered desirable as except for conference reported Emtel 541, no MAAG personnel

[1] Source: National Defense University, Lemnitzer Papers, 1961 Eyes Only Messages. Secret; Eyes Only. Repeated for information to General Decker. No time of transmission is given on the source text.

[2] Telegrams 516, 541, 545, and 558 are printed as Documents 178, 192, 193, and 199, respectively; regarding telegram 540, see footnote 2, Document 190.

attended subject meetings and as MAAG received info copies only after dispatch referenced cables. However, I was given short preview of the 6 points in Emtel 540[3] and commented on two of them. Although MAAG has no concern about reporting of statements by various GVN officials concerned, feel strongly MAAG opinions should have been solicited and included in the comment and résumé sections of these cables as they, of necessity, precondition at high level decision and policy making levels. Also, although MAAG positions were restated by my staff and me during General Taylor's personal question period[4] as well as in answers to lists of questions submitted by various teams of the Taylor group,[5] they will be subject to overall evaluation and combination in the final report and may well not completely cover the questions highlighted in reference cables.

As the Washington Task Force on Vietnam and the Taylor Fact-Finding Group are well briefed on the situation here, I shall only cover few major points. Most have been questioned over past year and MAAG within its capabilities has taken action. As background MAAG has for the past year predicated its actions on conviction that the insurgency, then in its next to last stage, could only be defeated by the following actions:

A. Development of national plan to counter insurgency.

B. Formation of a viable responsive centrally directed intelligence organization.

C. A coordination and control "Framework" for implementing national plan which has authority and ability to integrate at successive levels down to village and hamlet the political, military, psychological and economic arms of governmental power.

D. A politico-military approach to sealing the porous land and sea borders of South Vietnam against VC infiltration, thus eliminating foreign VC "safe havens."

E. Winning the people back from behind Bamboo Curtain to militant not passive-neutralist support of the government against VC blandishment and terror.

F. Additional manpower (recently approved) to allow "rotational training base" so that elements ARVN could be disengaged from operational commitment and trained on phased basis to improve its dangerously low level of training.

G. Additional trained manpower determined by increasing enemy infiltration and capabilities to improve logistic, intelligence and support elements as well as furnish needed fighting replacements and units.

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[3] The six points under reference here are essentially the same as points A–F under Section 2, Document 190.

[4] Not further identified.

[5] Apparently a reference to Document 173.

H. Reorganization and retraining of military establishment to make it more responsive to counterinsurgency operations plus institution single chain of command.

I. Development of single military operations plan under single chain of command to be integrated into overall national plan, when developed by GVN, to counter the insurgency. These requirements were written into country team U.S. counterinsurgency plan * handed to Diem by Ambassador Durbrow last February. Many of military elements of plan have been approved or are in process. The "Province Chief" problem as it affects the chain of command is the major military element not yet resolved in the implementation phase, although some better cooperation has been gained.

MAAG will continue to press for continuing military progress but some months ago the time was reached when GVN must be guided into supporting political, social and economic actions as a matter of urgency if the military contribution can be meaningful and permanent. Reported Taylor–Diem–Thuan talks indicate possibility of break-through in this field similar to that in military field. However, recommended that U.S. not make firm commitments unless conditioned at least in part on GVN performance. In Saigon Emtel to State limited distribution 558 Thuan appears definite on questioning if 3,000 Special Forces was to be in addition to Ranger Border Forces mentioned by Taylor with Thuan's estimate of GVN capability to organize and deploy 4–5,000 Rangers. If more Ranger Units are to be organized this will further dangerously dilute ARVN leadership and manpower capability and should be critically examined. If currently organized Rangers are to be used this will take over half of units now in being for "Border Ranger Force" which are now assigned elsewhere and will need replacing. Mobility for these Rangers raises problem of command. Close coordination and agreement between GVN commanders and MAAG "can be made to work" only if MAAG commands this transportation. Although I have made written representation Diem, Thuan and Ty, under my "advisory role" I have not in over a year gotten really adequate cooperation on joint operational planning. I feel prior command authority for MAAG is imperative. This same applies, any American Units or individuals which may be assigned here. There are also other military factors such as terrain that need considering in any analysis of this plan and of course current significant operations and MAAG plans need consideration. General Lansdale's special capabilities would be most acceptable for this "Command" as long as the operation is under MAAG command. I am under the impression that

* Document 1. Durbrow presented Diem an abridged version of the plan on February 13; see Document 11.

General Taylor was thinking in the direction of placing the entire border force under military command. I feel this should be the case.

In respect to Saigon Emtel State 541, the "Politico-Psychological Point," mentioning the offensive MAAG will of course continue to press for military action and "a genuine and important victory over the VC" (Saigon Emtel to State 545), by the GVN and RVNAF. I have made it known to Thuan and general officers that there must be no let up in hot war and that offensive spirit is of the essence. MAAG messages to CINCPAC info JCS MAGAR-TD-OP3020 and MAG-AR-OP3041[7] show offensive spirit continues. This offense is of course, realistically determined. The strength and training of RVNAF which except for better organization and within limits determined by operational commitments, improved counter-guerrilla training, has not yet felt any significant impact combat capability wise from the approval of additional 50,000. Induction and training time must be kept in mind.

In respect to Thuan's request for American instructors for the Thu Duc Reserve Officers School, this again opens the question of so-called "face to face" training—use of advisors as instructors. I invited Mr. Thuan and the Ambassador to SSNG Mao to inspect MAAG worldwide concept of training indigenous personnel to train their own forces. In my considered opinion this is only way VN armed forces will ever be taught to carry their own load—and am concerned at change from Diem's previous attitude to "give me the material and I will do the job" to what appears to be "you do it for me." This war can and will be won only by the Vietnamese themselves; we should consider the danger of "over helping" to the point of dulling their own determination and resolve. The specific officers Thuan mentioned as "not very good" are top graduates of last class who, following the U.S. OCS concept, remain to instruct the new students—and then only in School of Soldier. MAAG senior advisor reports other VN instructors adequately qualified. MAAG advisors assigned can and will do job well and in time.

In conclusion we most hopeful that Joint Survey of situation at Province level will result in timely and significant improvement in all areas bearing on problem. Am confident survey group will find MAAG Detachments in good order and training fully oriented on counter-guerrilla operations. Fully recognize that due advanced state of insurgency, Taylor Group of necessity gave heavy emphasis to military matters here and we naturally glad to have benefit their thinking and assistance. Will continue to press all possible on

[7] These messages, dated October 31 (311901Z) and November 1 (011459Z), respectively, reported on recent ARVN operations against the Viet Cong. (Washington National Records Center, RG 319, HQDA Message Center Microfilm, Reel 10605)

military side but need help in interlocking political-economic-psychological areas which have highest hopes Joint Survey will provide.

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209. Paper Prepared by the Ambassador to India (Galbraith)[1]

Washington, November 3, 1961.

A PLAN FOR SOUTH VIETNAM

The situation in South Vietnam is perilously close to the point of no return. Serious thought is being given to a military operation in South Vietnam which would entail all the risks of the operation in Korea of ten years ago, without the justification of a surprise attack across the boundary, without the support of the United Nations, and without a population determined to fight for independence. This paper suggests a United States program which would entail neither abandonment of South Vietnam nor a major military involvement on our part.

The proposal assumes that our long-run objective in South Vietnam should be the creation of an independent, economically viable and politically neutral state, rather than a limping American satellite. As a beginning, we would want an end to the fighting in South Vietnam, and a United Nations presence to supervise the keeping of the peace. We would also hope that a start could be made towards a strong, responsive and popularly based government in South Vietnam.

Certain circumstances seem to make this a propitious time for an approach along the lines suggested here. The Geneva Conference on Laos appears to be reaching its climax. The split between the Soviet Union and Communist China has come into the open, and seems to be at an acute stage. Prime Minister Nehru will be in position to transmit in both directions the thoughts of the President, and of India and others at the United Nations. The Taylor Mission and some of the accompanying press reports have given credibility to possible United States military intervention, and have thus proba-

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, President's Office File, Vietnam Country Series, Security 1961. Secret. The source text was attached to a signed letter of November 3 from Galbraith to the President, which reads in full: "You asked for my views on Vietnam. They are set forth in this paper. I might add that they are shared by Abe Chayes, who has collaborated with me in preparing the paper." Galbraith was in Washington for the State visit of Prime Minister Nehru.

bly increased our bargaining position vis-à-vis the Russians, the Chinese Communists and the neutrals.

I would recommend:

1. Replacement of Ambassador Nolting by an ambassador of the character and prominence of Governor Harriman. We need someone who can hold his own with both Diem and the United States military, who will insist once and for all on government reform, and who will understand the United States political implications of developments there. If Harriman himself is unavailable, I would suggest David Lilienthal or George McGhee.

2. A United Nations resolution confirming the independence of the Republic of Vietnam, and calling for immediate dispatch of United Nations observer groups to Vietnam.

The proposal for such a resolution should come, if possible, from a country not directly associated with the United States, and the program for an observer team, as in Lebanon, or a UNEF as in the Gaza Strip, should be in response to an invitation from the Government of Vietnam. The observers should be drawn primarily from the national forces of United Nations members other than the permanent members of the Security Council. The United States should make it clear, however, that it stands ready to supply personnel and equipment for a United Nations contingent in Vietnam as needed, and that any American personnel sent to Vietnam would share the functions of other United Nations personnel and would be subject to the control of the United Nations command. (This would presumably not affect the present MAAG in Vietnam.)

The scope of the observer group would be to report not only on infiltration into Vietnam from outside, but also on any activity within the country dangerous to the peace. The United Nations observer group would be assembled and dispatched under arrangements made by the Acting Secretary General, and its operations would be supervised by him in consultation with a small advisory committee. The theory of the authorizing resolution would, of course, be that the Viet Cong activity against the present Government of Vietnam is directed from outside of South Vietnam and therefore constitutes external aggression.

This proposal should be presented to Prime Minister Nehru now. Since India is the chairman of the present ICC in Vietnam and since the object of the United Nations presence is in part to replace the ICC and to perform more effectively the job of keeping the peace, Nehru's agreement to the proposal would be most important.

3. Prompt agreement at Geneva on a neutral Laos, including an understanding that Laos is not to be used as a corridor or staging point for operations in South Vietnam. If possible, Ambassador Harriman might approach the Russians on the subject of the mutual

interests of the United States and the Soviet Union in cessation of fighting in South Vietnam as well as in Laos.

4. In any event, the Prime Minister might be sounded out on his approaching Ho Chi Minh along the following lines:

a. Achieving a cease fire in South Vietnam.

b. An indication that the long-range United States goal is an independent South Vietnam not necessarily allied with us.

c. Improvement of economic conditions in the country, with increased trade between North and South Vietnam along the lines of interzonal trade in Germany, when peaceful conditions make this possible.

d. Possible reciprocal recognition by the Western and Soviet Blocs of both North and South Vietnam and ultimate admission of both countries to the United Nations.

5. In talking with Nehru, we should make clear that the United States stands ready both to continue its present program of economic assistance to Vietnam, and to contribute to possible programs of the United Nations Special Fund in the area.

The program recommended here avoids the high risk and limited promise alternative of armed intervention. Its long-range hopes are that South Vietnam would become a viable independent state, North Vietnam would become less dependent on Communist China, daily life in both countries would become safer and more prosperous, and the Sino-Soviet struggle for dominance in Southeast Asia might abate.

210. Letter From the President's Military Representative (Taylor) to the President [1]

Washington, November 3, 1961.

MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: I am submitting herewith the report of the mission which visited South Vietnam, Thailand, and Hong Kong in the period 15 October to 3 November 1961 in compliance with your letter to me of 13 October 1961. [2] We avoided Laos on our trip on the recommendation of Ambassador Brown who, with Brigadier General Boyle, his MAAG Chief, came to Bangkok to discuss the Laos situation with us. In addition to Dr. Rostow, the members of my party included representatives of State, ICA, Defense, JCS, and CIA.

My recommendations, already laid before you by cable, represent the emergency program which we feel our Government should implement without delay. After you have reached a decision on this program, it will be a major challenge to our governmental machinery in Washington to see that the many segments of the program which involve many departments and agencies are executed with maximum energy and proper timing. I would suggest that a formalized procedure be established and promulgated to assure effective and orderly implementation.

While we feel that the program recommended represents those measures which should be taken in our present knowledge of the situation in Southeast Asia, I would not suggest that it is the final word. Future needs beyond this program will depend upon the kind of settlement we obtain in Laos and the manner in which Hanoi decides to adjust its conduct to that settlement. If the Hanoi decision is to continue the irregular war declared on South Vietnam in 1959 with continued infiltration and covert support of guerrilla bands in

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Taylor Report A & B. Top Secret. No drafting information is given on the source text, but in his memoirs Taylor states that the letter was drafted by both Rostow and him (*Swords and Plowshares*, p. 243).

This letter and its attachments are in a binder entitled "Report on General Taylor's Mission to South Vietnam, 3 November 1961," which also includes a table of contents. The source text is Tab A.

At 4 p.m. on November 3, the President greeted at the White House all the returning members of the Taylor Mission. From 4:05 to 5:15 p.m., the President met separately with Taylor. (Kennedy Library, JFK Log) Although no record of the discussion at the meeting was found, Taylor, apparently at this meeting, submitted the letter and its attachments. Excerpts from the letter and attachments are printed in *Pentagon Papers: Gravel Edition*, vol. II, pp. 92–98.

[2] The President's instruction to Taylor is printed in Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares*, pp. 225–226.

the territory of our ally, we will then have to decide whether to accept as legitimate the continued guidance, training, and support of a guerrilla war across an international boundary, while the attacked react only inside their borders. Can we admit the establishment of the common law that the party attacked and his friends are denied the right to strike the source of aggression, after the fact of external aggression is clearly established? It is our view that our government should undertake with the Vietnamese the measures outlined herein, but should then consider and face the broader question beyond.

We cannot refrain from expressing, having seen the situation on the ground, our common sense of outrage at the burden which this kind of aggression imposes on a new country, only seven years old, with a difficult historical heritage to overcome, confronting the inevitable problems of political, social, and economic transition to modernization. It is easy and cheap to destroy such a country whereas it is difficult undisturbed to build a nation coming out of a complex past without carrying the burden of a guerrilla war.

We were similarly struck in Thailand with the injustice of subjecting this promising nation in transition to the heavy military burdens it faces in fulfilling its role in SEATO security planning along with the guerrilla challenge beginning to form up on its northeast frontier.

It is my judgment and that of my colleagues that the United States must decide how it will cope with Khrushchev's "wars of liberation" which are really para-wars of guerrilla aggression. This is a new and dangerous Communist technique which bypasses our traditional political and military responses. While the final answer lies beyond the scope of this report, it is clear to me that the time may come in our relations to Southeast Asia when we must declare our intention to attack the source of guerrilla aggression in North Vietnam and impose on the Hanoi Government a price for participating in the current war which is commensurate with the damage being inflicted on its neighbors to the south.

In closing, let me add that our party left Southeast Asia with the sense of having viewed a serious problem but one which is by no means hopeless. We have many assets in this part of the world which, if properly combined and appropriately supported, offer high odds for ultimate success.

Basically the forces at work in Vietnam, Thailand, and Hong Kong are extremely positive in character. Everywhere there is new activity and momentum. In the long run there is no reason to believe that the rate of growth and the degree of modernization in non-Communist Asia as a whole will be outpaced by developments in Communist Asia. There is no need for fatalism that, somehow,

Southeast Asia will inevitably fall into Communist hands. We have the means to make it otherwise.

Sincerely yours,

Maxwell D. Taylor

[Attachment 1]

Paper Prepared by the President's Military Representative (Taylor) [3]

General Conclusions

1. Communist strategy aims to gain control of Southeast Asia by methods of subversion and guerrilla war which by-pass conventional U.S. and indigenous strength on the ground. The interim Communist goal—en route to total take-over—appears to be a neutral Southeast Asia, detached from U.S. protection. This strategy is well on the way to success in Vietnam.

2. In Vietnam (and Southeast Asia) there is a double crisis in confidence: doubt that U.S. is determined to save Southeast Asia; doubt that Diem's methods can frustrate and defeat Communist purposes and methods. The Vietnamese (and Southeast Asians) will undoubtedly draw—rightly or wrongly—definitive conclusions in coming weeks and months concerning the probable outcome and will adjust their behavior accordingly. What the U.S. does or fails to do will be decisive to the end result.

3. Aside from the morale factor, the Vietnamese Government is caught in interlocking circles of bad tactics and bad administrative arrangements which pin their forces on the defensive in ways which permit a relatively small Viet-Cong force (about one-tenth the size of the GVN regulars) to create conditions of frustration and terror certain to lead to a political crisis, if a positive turning point is not soon achieved. The following recommendations are designed to achieve that favorable turn, to avoid a further deterioration in the situation in South Vietnam, and eventually to contain and eliminate the threat to its independence.

Recommendations

The following constitute my recommendations in response to the letter of The President to me dated 13 October 1961:

[3] Top Secret. The source text is Tab B.

General

That upon request from the Government of Vietnam (GVN) to come to its aid in resisting the increasing aggressions of the Viet-Cong and in repairing the ravages of the Delta flood which, in combination threaten the lives of its citizens and the security of the country, the U.S. Government offer to join the GVN in a massive joint effort as a part of a mobilization of GVN resources to cope with both the Viet-Cong (VC) and the ravages of the flood. The U.S. representatives will participate actively in this effort, particularly in the fields of government administration, military plans and operations, intelligence, and flood relief, going beyond the advisory role which they have observed in the past.

Specific

That in support of the foregoing broad commitment to a joint effort with Diem, the following specific measures be undertaken:

1. The U.S. Government will be prepared to provide individual administrators for insertion into the governmental machinery of South Vietnam in types and numbers to be worked out with President Diem.

2. A joint effort will be made to improve the military-political intelligence system beginning at the provincial level and extending upward through the government and armed forces to the Central Intelligence Organization.

3. The U.S. Government will engage in a joint survey of the conditions in the provinces to assess the social, political, intelligence, and military factors bearing on the prosecution of the counter-insurgency in order to reach a common estimate of these factors and a common determination of how to deal with them. As this survey will consume time, it should not hold back the immediate actions which are clearly needed regardless of its outcome.

4. A joint effort will be made to free the Army for mobile, offensive operations. This effort will be based upon improving the training and equipping of the Civil Guard and the Self-Defense Corps, relieving the regular Army of static missions, raising the level of the mobility of Army forces by the provision of considerably more helicopters and light aviation, and organizing a Border Ranger Force for a long-term campaign on the Laotian border against the Viet-Cong infiltrators. The U.S. Government will support this effort with equipment and with military units and personnel to do those tasks which the Armed Forces of Vietnam cannot perform in time. Such tasks include air reconnaissance and photography, airlift (beyond the present capacity of SVN forces), special intelligence, and air-ground support techniques.

5. The U.S. Government will assist the GVN in effecting surveillance and control over the coastal waters and inland waterways, furnishing such advisors, operating personnel and small craft as may be necessary for quick and effective operations.

6. The MAAG, Vietnam, will be reorganized and increased in size as may be necessary by the implementation of these recommendations.

7. The U.S. Government will offer to introduce into South Vietnam a military Task Force to operate under U.S. control for the following purposes:

a. Provide a U.S. military presence capable of raising national morale and of showing to Southeast Asia the seriousness of the U.S. intent to resist a Communist take-over.

b. Conduct logistical operations in support of military and flood relief operations.

c. Conduct such combat operations as are necessary for self-defense and for the security of the area in which they are stationed.

d. Provide an emergency reserve to back up the Armed Forces of the GVN in the case of a heightened military crisis.

e. Act as an advance party of such additional forces as may be introduced if CINCPAC or SEATO contingency plans are invoked.

8. The U.S. Government will review its economic aid program to take into account the needs of flood relief and to give priority to those projects in support of the expanded counter-insurgency program.

[Attachment 2]

Paper Prepared by the Members of the Taylor Mission [1]

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

Communist Strategy in Southeast Asia

At the present time, the Communists are pursuing a clear and systematic strategy in Southeast Asia. It is a strategy of extending Communist power and influence in ways which bypass U.S. nuclear strength, U.S. conventional naval, air, and ground forces, and the conventional strength of indigenous forces in the area. Their strategy is rooted in the fact that international law and practice does not yet recognize the mounting of guerrilla war across borders as aggression justifying counter-attack at the source.

The strategy is a variant on Mao's classic three-stage offensive. First, a political base for guerrilla war, subversion, and dissidence is established in each country in the area, exploiting its unique vulnerabilities via trained local or introduced cadres. Second, guerrilla war

[1] Top Secret. The source text is Tab C.

is begun. Third, a maximum effort is made to translate the Communist position achieved on the ground, plus the weakness and cross-purposes in the non-Communist camp, to induce a neutralist interim solution, blocking the U.S. military presence, as with the proposed renunciation by Laos of SEATO protection. Complete Communist take-over, by whatever means may appear feasible, is the evident ultimate objective.

Mao's third stage—overt conventional warfare, with guerrillas in an ancillary role—is apparently now judged too dangerous to pursue, on the grounds that it is likely to trigger U.S. (or SEATO) intervention.

This modified Mao strategy is actually underway in Laos and South Vietnam. Cambodia, with Sihanouk's anticipatory collaboration, has already adjusted to the likelihood (in his view) that the Communist strategy will succeed. The strategy is clearly foreshadowed in Thailand. The initial bases for such a program have been laid in Malaya, Indonesia, and Burma; but they will probably not be exploited to the full until the South Vietnam struggle is favorably resolved. The Communists undoubtedly believe—and with good reason—that if the strategy succeeds in Laos and South Vietnam the enterprise will rapidly gather momentum throughout Southeast Asia.

This is not the only possible Communist strategy in Southeast Asia. An overt use of Viet-Minh and ChiCom divisions is conceivable, although the terrain and logistical structure of Southeast Asia sets a relatively low limit on the scale of conventional engagement in that theater. And it is in the range of possible contingencies that such a direct attack might be backed by some Soviet nuclear power. But current strategy is as described.

Communist Strategy in South Vietnam

In South Vietnam the tactical application of this general strategy is now in an advanced stage. An internally organized guerrilla war is being conducted in the South, recently expanded and strengthened with professional cadres. A second front of military pressure has been built up in the Central Plateau, with significant components of infiltration via Laos and the systematic exploitation of Montagnard and sect dissidence. In addition, a pocket of reserve strength is organized above Saigon in Zone D (perhaps 1500 troops), available for a climactic strike in the context of a political crisis. The Viet-Cong command a capability for considerable terroristic activity in and around Saigon.

The military strategy being pursued is, evidently, to pin down the ARVN on defensive missions; to create a pervasive sense of insecurity and frustration by hit-and-run raids on self-defense corps

and militia units, ambushing the reserve forces if possible as they come up to defend; and to dramatize the inability of the GVN to govern or to build, by the assassination of officials and the sabotage of public works.

Meanwhile a reserve force of unknown size and capability is being created in the forests and mountains surrounding the plateau, straddling the Laos (and possibly Cambodian) border which offers a supply base, a relatively secure infiltration route, and safe haven. Depending on its size and capability, this force could be used for a series of demoralizing raids on the cities of the plateau, on the model of the raids on Phouc Thanh. It could attempt to seize and hold the Kontum–Pleiku area, declaring, as in Xieng Khouang, a new government to be recognized by Bloc states. It could by-pass the plateau cities and, by infiltration down to the sea, isolate the coastal cities much as the Mekong cities have been isolated by the Pathet-Lao.

One of the most important facts about the situation in Vietnam is that the size and capabilities of the Viet-Cong forces in the plateau are not known. Its capabilities could range from a mere capacity to continue to harass, to a capacity, when surfaced, of producing a Dien Bien Phu.

On current evidence we lean to a conservative assessment of this force (perhaps 4000); but it justifies a concentrated intelligence effort, and a quick-action contingency plan, as well as the specific action proposed in the appendices. (See, especially, Appendix F, Frontier Force Vietnam.)

Despite the considerable guerrilla capabilities of the Viet-Cong, Communist strategy now appears, on balance, to aim at an essentially political denouement rather than the total military capture of the country, as in the case of Mao's campaign in China. A maximum effort is under way to increase political disaffection at every level; among the sects, the minority groups, the trade unions, the students, and the inteilectuals. Energetic efforts to dramatize the weaknesses of Diem's regime and to induce discouragement about U.S. policy in Laos and Southeast Asia generally are being pursued. The enemy objective seems to be to produce a political crisis by a combination of military and non-military means out of which would come a South Vietnamese Souvanna Phouma, willing to contemplate unification on terms acceptable to Hanoi, including disengagement from the U.S.

Enemy Order of Battle and Level of Engagement

On the following page is the best evaluation available of the Viet-Cong Order of Battle in South Vietnam and Casualty and Combat Rates for 1961.

The relatively modest increase in the scale of the Viet-Cong forces in 1961 in the southern region (NAMBO) was accompanied by a sharp increase in organization in which the infiltration of cadres from the north probably played a significant part. A more substantial increase occurred in 1961 in the northern region (Intersector Five). Appendix A(I)[3] suggests an over-all expansion of Viet-Cong forces from 12,000 in July to 16,500 at the present time.

The Casualty and Combat Rate figures, which MAAG believes to be not grossly inaccurate, indicate the peak in Viet-Cong activity in connection with the April election and then the second more radical increase in Viet-Cong attacks in August and September. In September there was a doubling of Vietnamese casualties and a much less than proportionate increase in casualties inflicted on the Viet-Cong. This is a statistical reflection of the situation which helped bring on the present crisis. In October the increased casualty rate persisted.

Although the main weight of Viet-Cong attack remains in the well organized southern area (III Corps), there was a sharp rise in incidents and casualties taken in the II Corps Area (Pleiku–Kontum) in August and September.

Estimate of Viet-Cong Strength in South Vietnam
July–October, 1961

	July	October
REGULAR FORCES		
Nambo Region	8,150	9,000
Interzone 5	0*	0*
Total	8,150	9,000
REGIONAL FORCES		
Nambo Region	0*	0*
Interzone 5	6,200	7,000
Total	6,200	7,000
Over-all Total	14,350	16,000

[3] Section I of Appendix A is not printed.

* It is assumed VC forces exist in these categories but their presence is not confirmed by hard evidence. [Footnote in the source text.]

Casualties and Combat Rate: Vietnam 1961[7]

	Casualties[8]		Viet-Cong Incidents		
	Viet-Cong	GVN	Attacks	Terrorism	Sabotage
Jan	2449	615	148	180	89
Feb	1569	583	143	147	106
Mar	2429	610	241	354	118
Apr	2212	850	309	382	149
May	1397	671	124	344	86
Jun	1551	500	163	398	89
Jul	2376	746	189	479	216
Aug	1574	676	408	337	124
Sep	1877	1314	440	439	100
Oct	2004	1400	N.E.	N.E.	N.E.

Viet-Cong Weaknesses

Although much in Saigon and South Vietnam recalls vividly the Indo-China War, the analogy is inexact. The position of the Viet-Cong (and Ho Chi Minh) is substantially different from that of the Viet Minh forces when fighting the French in the early 1950's.

—The Communists no longer carry persuasively the banners of national independence against colonial rule.

—Their guerrilla forces must rely primarily on terror, intimidation, and the notion that U.S. weakness makes the Viet-Cong the local wave of the future.

—The Viet-Cong cannot safely engage their forces against the GVN regulars and North Vietnam cannot engage its divisional strength for fear of U.S. action. The Viet-Cong rely primarily on southern recruits and southerners trained in the north and re-introduced.

—The need to conceal Hanoi's directing role imposes important limitations on infiltration and supply routes and on tactics generally.

It must be remembered that the 1959 political decision in Hanoi to launch the guerrilla and political campaign of 1960-61 arose because of Diem's increasing success in stabilizing his rule and moving his country forward in the several preceding years. Meanwhile, word has spread throughout Vietnam that Hanoi's rule has led to brutality and hunger. Men may believe that Hanoi is the wave of the future and a route to unification, but the Communist

[7] Figures supplied by MAAG Saigon, from GVN data. [Footnote in the source text.]

[8] Included—killed, wounded, and captured, for Viet-Cong. Same categories for GVN, regular, militia, and self-defense corps, combined. [Footnote in the source text.]

performance in the North is not admired. The considerable grandeur of the Viet Minh in the early 1950's has been largely dissipated. By comparison, this is a pretty shabby offensive, both militarily and politically, although potentially lethal. The maximum estimate of voluntary, positive support for the Communists in South Vietnam is about 200,000 or 2 per cent of the population. (Appendix I.)[*] This is a Vietnamese estimate. The official U.S. estimate is about half this level.

Finally, the Communists now not only have something to gain—the South—but a base to risk—the North—if war should come.

The Crisis in South Vietnam

It is perfectly evident that South Vietnam is now undergoing an acute crisis of confidence, stretching from the top to the bottom of the country. The principal elements involved in this crisis are clear enough:

1. Uncertainty about the seriousness of the American commitment to defend South Vietnam induced by the Laos negotiation. Many believe that the U.S. will be prepared to settle for a Souvanna in Saigon.
2. The September successes of the Viet-Cong, indicating an enemy capability of outstripping the build-up of ARVN capabilities. (It should be recalled that the infiltration of one guerrilla imposes the burden of increasing GVN forces by, perhaps, fifteen men to stay even.) The military frustration of the past two months has, in turn, made acute, throughout the administration, a dissatisfaction with Diem's method of rule, with his lack of identification with his people, and with his strategy which has been endemic for some years.
3. The flood, imposing a heavy economic and administrative burden on an already strained government and society.

Beneath the surface of this immediate crisis are two vicious circles which have been operating for many months in South Vietnam and which the improvement in atmosphere in the months preceding September tended only superficially to conceal.

The first vicious circle is military. The lack of firm and well organized operational intelligence has helped produce a defensive disposition of forces to guard against Viet-Cong attack—a stance perhaps inherited to some degree from the French and not effectively corrected by subsequent U.S. training. This defensive stance has drawn 80 to 85 per cent of the ARVN, including the bulk of the specially trained Ranger Force, into essentially static tasks. Thus, initiative has been conceded to the enemy.

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[*] Appendix I, dealing with covert matters, is not printed.

This, in turn, has made worse a bad system of civil-military relations. The bulk of the military forces remain in control of the Province Chiefs because it is their responsibility to protect the population and installations of their areas; a defensive strategy thus automatically puts the bulk of the military in their hands. When enemy attacks take place, forces are brought up from reserve too slowly to be effective, due to a lack of effective command and control, communications, and mobility.

A very high proportion of ARVN casualties (perhaps 90 per cent) results from ambushes which derive directly, in turn, from these operational characteristics. The consequent inability effectively to protect the people leads, in turn, to a drying up of the basic sources of intelligence and limits the government's ability to raise recruits.

Thus, poor intelligence, poor command and control arrangements, and poor mobility reinforce each other, leading to a defensive military disposition of resources and a progressive deterioration in the military position of the ARVN.

The second vicious circle, interwoven with the first, is political. As is widely understood, Diem's instinctive administrative style is that of an old fashioned Asian ruler, seeking to maintain all the strings of power in his own hands, while fragmenting power beneath him. The inability to mobilize intelligence effectively for operational purposes directly flows from this fact, as do the generally poor relations between the Province Chiefs and the military commanders, the former being Diem's reliable agents, the latter a power base he fears. The consequent frustration of Diem's military commanders—a frustration well known to Diem and heightened by the November 1960 coup—leads him to actions which further complicate his problem; e.g., his unwillingness to delegate military operations clearly to his generals.

Beyond the military circle, Diem's operating style and the personal political insecurity it has generated leads him to mistrust excessively many intellectuals and others of the younger generation who are badly needed to give his administration vitality and contact with the people. Many of these men and women are profoundly anti-Communist and capable of constructive use in the national effort; but, on the sidelines (or frustrated within the administration), they spend their efforts in complaints against the regime, while their country sinks towards a Communist take-over they do not want.

The Assets of South Vietnam

Despite these interwoven military and political vicious circles, South Vietnam has considerable assets in the struggle for its independence.

1. Armed forces of 170,000 regulars, of better quality than the Viet-Cong guerrillas, if it can bring the Communists to engagement; a Civil Guard of 64,000, of whom about 20 per cent have been well retrained (but lack officers); a Self-Defense Corps of 53,000, poorly equipped and trained, but capable of improvement; a small but capable Air Force whose capacities are rendered ineffective by lack of target intelligence and a frustrating command structure; a somewhat woebegone Navy, whose potentialities are still to be established; a small, but excellent, Marine Corps of three battalions. In short, Vietnam has real military assets if they can be organized to engage the Viet-Cong. (Although it would almost certainly require external assistance if the North Vietnam divisions were to attack.)

2. With all his weaknesses, Diem has extraordinary ability, stubbornness, and guts.

3. Despite their acute frustration, the men of the Armed Forces and the administration respect Diem to a degree which gives their grumbling (and perhaps some plotting) a somewhat half-hearted character; and they are willing—by and large—to work for him, if he gives them a chance to do their jobs.

4. Within the military and non-military establishment, a new generation of younger men in their 30's is beginning to emerge with a strong will to get on with the job. Some of the new military commanders we met (in divisions, Rangers, Marines) are clearly dedicated, first-class, modern men of whom any nation could be proud. The same is true at the middle level of the bureaucracy.

5. The Vietnam economy, in both its agricultural and manufacturing sectors, has demonstrated, despite the pressures of the insurgency, an astonishing resilience.

6. Despite the intellectuals who sit on the side lines and complain; despite serious dissidence among the Montagnards, the sects, and certain old Viet Minh areas; despite the apathy and fear of the Viet-Cong in the countryside, the atmosphere in South Vietnam is, on balance, one of frustrated energy rather than passive acceptance of inevitable defeat.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly, however, that time has nearly run out for converting these assets into the bases for victory. Diem himself—and all concerned with the fate of the country—are looking to American guidance and aid to achieve a turning point in Vietnam's affairs. From all quarters in Southeast Asia the message on Vietnam is the same: vigorous American action is needed to buy time for Vietnam to mobilize and organize its real assets; but the time for such a turn around has nearly run out. And if Vietnam goes, it will be exceedingly difficult if not impossible to hold Southeast Asia. What will be lost is not merely a crucial piece of real

estate, but the faith that the U.S. has the will and the capacity to deal with the Communist offensive in that area.

A Strategy for Turning the Tide and for Assuming the Offensive in Vietnam

The elements required for buying time and assuming the offensive in Vietnam are, in the view of this mission, the following:

1. A quick U.S. response to the present crisis which would demonstrate by deeds—not merely words—the American commitment seriously to help save Vietnam rather than to disengage in the most convenient manner possible. To be persuasive this commitment must include the sending to Vietnam of some U.S. military forces.
2. A shift in the American relation to the Vietnamese effort from advice to limited partnership. The present character and scale of the war in South Vietnam decree that only the Vietnamese can defeat the Viet-Cong; but at all levels Americans must, as friends and partners—not as arms-length advisors—show them how the job might be done—not tell them or do it for them.
3. Through this working association at all levels, the U.S. must bring about de facto changes in Diem's method of administration and seek to bring all elements of the Vietnamese Government closer to the Vietnamese people—thus helping break the vicious political circle.
4. By concurrent actions in the fields of intelligence, command and control, mobility, and training, the U.S. must bring about a situation where an effective reserve is mobilized and brought to bear offensively on clearly established and productive offensive targets—thus helping break the vicious military circle.
5. In a number of fields, U.S. initiative with the Vietnamese can help immediately to launch certain limited offensive operations.
6. Certain concrete, limited research and development possibilities must be quickly geared into field operations.
7. The program of economic and military aid to Vietnam must be focused on measures which will not merely permit Vietnam to survive and to deal with the flood, but also to support the specific elements in the strategy outlined above.
8. The proposed program for dealing with the flood is an opportunity to make headway in a critical southern area, on both military and political fronts. It involves all action elements, including logistical elements of the U.S. military task force proposed elsewhere.

Behind this concept of a strategy to turn the tide and to assume the offensive lies a general proposition: when an interacting process is yielding a degenerative situation, the wisest course of action is to create a positive thrust at as many points as are accessible. No one action—not even the removal of Diem—is the key to success in Vietnam. Each of the elements listed as essential to this strategy must play its part.

The balance of this summary examines individually the specific elements in the proposed general strategy.

A Quick Lift

It is evident that morale in Vietnam will rapidly crumble—and in Southeast Asia only slightly less quickly—if the sequence of expectations set in motion by Vice President Johnson's visit and climaxed by General Taylor's mission are not soon followed by a hard U.S. commitment to the ground in Vietnam.

Technically, all that is involved at this stage in these proposals is that we announce that, due to Viet Minh aggression across South Vietnam's frontier, we are setting aside our dilute and conditional assent to the 1954 Geneva Accords, lifting the MAAG ceiling, and assuming full freedom of U.S. action until that aggression ceases and South Vietnam's independence is assured.

On July 21, 1954, General Smith declared that the U.S. "would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the Agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security." [10] The Jorden Report provides a clear basis for invoking this proviso. In combination, these two elements of reservation and evidence should permit us to present to the U.N. the same kind of case for our actions as was presented on August 13, 1958, by President Eisenhower, in the context of the Lebanon–Jordan crisis. (See, especially, Section I of Eisenhower's speech. [11])

The sequence we have in mind to implement the strategy and the proposals outlined in this report is something like the following, which we present for illustrative purposes and to supply some concreteness. There would be considerable advantage in shortening the timetable.

1. *Week of November 5.* Study and decision on General Taylor's recommendations. Completion of Jorden Report. Planning of United Nations track.

2. *Week of November 12.* Indication to Diem that we are prepared to receive a request for aid along the lines the President may decide; consultation with Congressional leaders, indication to Allies (including SEATO) of what we plan to do; exchange of letters between Diem and President, including understandings which cannot be made public (e.g., relative to intelligence and covert operations).

3. *Week of November 19.* Publication of sanitized presidential letters; movement of first U.S. units to Vietnam (preferably flood task force, helicopters, Jungle Jim); publication of Jorden Report; Presidential presentation of U.S. case to U.N. (or presidential presentation to U.S. public and Stevenson presentation to the U.N.). A special session of Congress to receive a presidential message and to pass a

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[10] For text of the full statement by Smith, see *Foreign Relations*, 1952–1954, vol. XVI, p. 1500.

[11] For text of Eisenhower's address to the Third Special Emergency Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, August 13, 1958, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1958*, pp. 1032–1039.

resolution of support might be considered as one method for preparing to implement the suggested program. A quiet message to the U.S.S.R. should be dispatched indicating that we propose to help defend South Vietnam and urging Moscow to use its influence with Ho Chi Minh to call his dogs off, mind his business, and feed his people.

Included in the sequence above should be a review of contingency plans, designed to back the initial steps; a general review of plans with respect to Southeast Asia in relation to Berlin; and decision as to whether further call-up of U.S. reserves is required to provide ready forces up to the nuclear threshold for Southeast Asia as well as for Berlin.

Limited Partnership

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this mission's effort is the unanimity of view—individually arrived at by the specialists involved—that what is now required is a shift from U.S. advice to limited partnership and working collaboration with the Vietnamese. The present war cannot be won by direct U.S. action; it must be won by the Vietnamese. But there is a general conviction among us that the Vietnamese performance in every domain can be substantially improved if Americans are prepared to work side by side with the Vietnamese on the key problems. Moreover, there is evidence that Diem is, in principle, prepared for this step, and that most—not all—elements in his establishment are eagerly awaiting it.

There is a second conclusion. We have attempted to answer the political and psychological question: would the more substantial involvement of Americans be counter-productive (see especially Appendix G)? Our conclusion—based on experience and judgment in Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand—is the following. If Americans come in and go to work side by side with the Vietnamese, preferably outside Saigon, the net effect will almost certainly be positive. The danger lies in excessive headquarters establishments and a failure to do palpably serious jobs. The record of U.S.-Asian relations in field tasks is excellent.

After all, the United States is not operating in Southeast Asia in order to recreate a colonial system doomed by history; it is attempting to permit new nations to find their feet and to make an independent future. Despite Communist propaganda, this is widely understood. When Americans work hard and effectively in this area, they meet friendship.

Such side by side partnership requires, of course, men of tact, strongly motivated to come and to get on with the task. They must be led at every level by Americans of first rate technical competence, imagination and human sympathy. It is our conviction that such

Americans exist and can be recruited for the specific tasks listed below. On the other hand, the selection of personnel for these operations must be done with extreme care. The operation will fail if the U.S. is not willing to contribute its best men to the effort in adequate numbers and to keep them in the field for substantial periods.

Following are the specific categories where the introduction of U.S. working advisors or working military units are suggested in the appendices—an asterisk indicating where such operations are, to some degree, under way.

—A high level government advisor or advisors. General Lansdale has been requested by Diem; and it may be wise to envisage a limited number of Americans—acceptable to Diem as well as to us—in key ministries. (Appendices C and G.)

—A Joint U.S.-Vietnamese Military Survey, down to the provincial level, in each of three corps areas, to make recommendations with respect to intelligence, command and control, more economical and effective passive defense, the build-up of a reserve for offensive purposes, military-province-chief relations, etc. (Appendix B.)

—Joint planning of offensive operations, including Border Control Operations. (Appendices A, F, and I.)

—Intimate liaison with the Vietnamese Central Intelligence Organizations (C.I.O.); with each of the seven intelligence services; and with the intelligence collection process at the provincial level. (Appendix I.)

—Jungle Jim. (Appendix A.)

—Counter infiltration operations in Laos. (Appendix F.)

—Increased covert offensive operations in North as well as in Laos and South Vietnam. (Appendix I.)

—The introduction, under MAAG operational control, of three helicopter squadrons—one for each corps area—and the provision of more light aircraft, as the need may be established. (Appendix A.)

—A radical increase in U.S. trainers at every level from the staff colleges, where teachers are short—to the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps, where a sharp expansion in competence may prove the key to mobilizing a reserve for offensive operations. (Appendices A and E.)

—The introduction of engineering and logistical elements within the proposed U.S. military task force to work in the flood area within the Vietnamese plan, on both emergency and longer term reconstruction tasks. (Appendix A.)

—A radical increase in U.S. special force teams in Vietnam: to work with the Vietnamese Ranger Force proposed for the border area (Appendix F); to assist in unit training, including training of Clandestine Action Service. (Appendices A and I.)

—Increase in MAAG support for the Vietnamese Navy. (Appendix A.)

—Introduction of U.S. Naval and/or Coast Guard personnel to assist in coastal and river surveillance and control, until Vietnamese naval capabilities can be improved. (Appendix A.)

—Reconsideration of the role of air power, leading to more effective utilization of assets now available, including release from political control of the 14 D–6 aircraft, institution of close-support techniques, and better employment of available weapons. (Appendix A–V.)

To execute this program of limited partnership requires a change in the charter, the spirit, and the organization of the MAAG in South Vietnam. It must be shifted from an advisory group to something nearer—but not quite—an operational headquarters in a theater of war. The objective of this shift is clear. The U.S. should become a limited partner in the war, avoiding formalized advice on the one hand, trying to run the war, on the other. Such a transition from advice to partnership has been made in recent months, on a smaller scale, by the MAAG in Laos.

Among the many consequences of this shift would be the rapid build-up of an intelligence capability both to identify operational targets for the Vietnamese and to assist Washington in making a sensitive and reliable assessment of the progress of the war. The basis for such a unit already exists in Saigon in the Intelligence Evaluation Center. It must be quickly expanded. (Appendix I.)

In Washington, as well, intelligence and back-up operations must be put on a quasi-wartime footing.

Reforming Diem's Administrative Method

The famous problem of Diem as an administrator and politician could be resolved in a number of ways:

—By his removal in favor of a military dictatorship which would give dominance to the military chain of command.

—By his removal in favor of a figure of more dilute power (e.g., Vice President Nguyen Ngoc Tho) who would delegate authority to act to both military and civil leaders.

—By bringing about a series of de facto administrative changes via persuasion at high levels; collaboration with Diem's aides who want improved administration; and by a U.S. operating presence at many working levels, using the U.S. presence (e.g., control over the helicopter squadrons) to force the Vietnamese to get their house in order in one area after another.

We have opted for the third choice, on the basis of both merit and feasibility.

Our reasons are these: First, it would be dangerous for us to engineer a coup under present tense circumstances, since it is by no means certain that we could control its consequences and potentialities for Communist exploitation. Second, we are convinced that a part of the complaint about Diem's administrative methods conceals a lack of first-rate executives who can get things done. In the endless debate between Diem and his subordinates (Diem complain-

ing of limited executive material; his subordinates, of Diem's bottleneck methods) both have hold of a piece of the truth.

The proposed strategy of limited partnership is designed both to force clear delegation of authority in key areas and to beef up Vietnamese administration until they can surface and develop the men to take over.

This is a difficult course to adopt. We can anticipate some friction and reluctance until it is proved that Americans can be helpful partners and that the techniques will not undermine Diem's political position. Shifts in U.S. attitudes and methods of administration as well as Vietnamese are required. But we are confident that it is the right way to proceed at this stage; and, as noted earlier, there is reason for confidence if the right men are sent to do the right jobs.

Bringing Diem's Administration Closer to the Vietnamese People

Although Diem's fundamental political problem is his inability to take the offensive, protect his villages and win the war, at many points his ability to win is, in turn, inhibited by the gap between his government and the people of South Vietnam. Proposals to narrow this gap appear in a number of the appendices. Programs underway are indicated with an asterisk.

—To press forward, and improve the signal and content of the Vietnamese radio network and to distribute radio receivers throughout the country. (Appendix D.)

—To determine quickly whether it is feasible to create a TV network, perhaps with Japanese assistance. (Appendix D.)

—To strengthen, with U.S. support, the scale and quality of the work of the Vietnamese Rural Reconstruction Teams. (Appendix I.)

—To use the occasion of the U.S. flood relief effort to encourage—by cooperation and example—a closer relation between the Vietnamese officials and the villagers in the four affected provinces. (Appendix G.)

—To help accelerate the civil action program for the Montagnards. (Appendix G.)

—By increasing Diem's sense of security and by tactful persuasion attempt to bring his government closer to the trade unions, students, sects, intellectuals, and villagers. The improvement of the Province Chiefs and their guidance in new directions is an essential part of this process. (Appendix C.)

—By using U.S. civil affairs teams in key areas, to demonstrate how more effective approaches to the villagers can be made. (Appendix G.)

—To strengthen the ARVN Civic Action Program and improving its effectiveness. (Appendix G.)

Although these—and other measures—should be attempted, our basic policy must be to diminish the tension arising between the

government and the people stemming from the security situation. The record shows that the disintegration of the political situation in South Vietnam since 1959 is primarily due to the government's inability to protect its citizens and to conduct the war effectively.

Against this background, we turn to the specific recommendations contained in the Appendices with respect to the interlocked questions of intelligence, command and control, mobility, and training. These are the technical areas where GVN improvement must be achieved if a successful offensive is to be launched.

Intelligence

The GVN has been, almost literally, fighting blind—awaiting attack before it responded and then responding slowly, awkwardly, and ineffectively. Guerrilla operations are designed to present few and fleeting targets. The successful conduct of guerrilla war requires a highly sophisticated intelligence effort, intimately geared to operations at every level from the villages to the planners. Vietnam has been served by a primitive and fragmented intelligence system, only obliquely linked to and focused on the problem of finding and seeking targets. Aside from U.S. encadrement of the intelligence system, and the strengthening of the U.S. Evaluation Center (earlier noted), Appendix A, VII, suggests the following two broad and urgent measures:

—Assign clear national responsibility for intelligence collection and evaluation to the Central Intelligence Organization.
—Create a joint U.S.-RVNAF Intelligence Group.

Further specific recommendations are contained in Appendix A, VII, and in Appendix I.

Given the acute lack of qualified U.S. personnel, the suggestions in these Appendices will require careful and urgent screening to ensure that U.S. advice and influence are applied selectively at crucial points.

Command and Control

The ambiguous role of the Province Chief—at once commander of the militia, "sector commander" nominally subject to the military, and Diem's political agent, with direct access to him, is a familiar and fundamental weakness on the Vietnam scene. The recommendation in Appendix A is: "remove Province Chiefs from the chain of command of the ARVN forces." This could prove to be the answer. But the immediate proposal of the mission, already accepted by Diem in principle, is that joint U.S.-Vietnamese teams examine command and control relations (and other aspects of the military problem) in each of the three Corps areas, province by province,

beginning with those provinces where the security situation is most acute.

It may prove to be the case that arrangements will be required somewhat more complex than a clean separation of Army and militia chains of command, for the following reasons:

—Continued intimate cooperation between the Army and the militia will be necessary for both offensive and defensive operations.

—The Army can be progressively disengaged from static duties (and thus from the Province Chiefs) only over a period of time.

—Continued intimate relations between the Army Commanders and the Province Chiefs will be required, since the Province Chiefs will remain a basic source of intelligence for military operations.

In short, we would anticipate that best results will be achieved by some combination of greater freedom of action for the regular forces and more effective cooperation between the civil and military at the province level. But a definitive conclusion awaits the results of the joint survey.

An essential ingredient in the command and control (as well as the intelligence) problem is that the U.S. establish a parallel communications system (as in Korea and in Laos) linking American elements encadred in the field with MAAG headquarters. Such a system is essential both to permit the MAAG staff to have a reliable picture of field operations and to provide the basis for timely U.S. intervention or persuasion at high Vietnam level.

Mobility

The requirements of quick response in defense and surprise in attack combine with the terrain, distances, and the inadequate roads of Vietnam to justify a radical increase in the availability of helicopters and light aircraft, and in work on ground mobility techniques. Although command and control problems would have to be solved if this new force were to be effectively used, we believe the best way to force the necessary changes is to introduce U.S. helicopter units, attached to each of the three corps, with U.S. officers maintaining control under MAAG. Even if desirable, there is no way of introducing this kind of force except as U.S. military units, given the shortage of pilots and maintenance personnel. (See Appendix A.)

Although the existing airlift in Vietnam is now not used with full efficiency, it is likely that an increased requirement for C–47 (or similar aircraft), as well as for lighter supply and personnel aircraft will rapidly emerge, if the recommendations in this report are adopted and yield some success. Basically, an effective operation against the Viet-Cong requires ample air supply, as well as ample troop-lift capacity. (Appendix A.)

Reserves

As noted earlier, the reserves available for systematic offensive action in the Vietnam armed forces are shockingly low. There is one battalion in reserve in the First Corps; two each in the Second, and in the Third Corps. Evidently ways must be found to increase this reserve. One major purpose of the proposed U.S.–Vietnam joint survey of the military situation is to find out, in one region after another, how this might be done. The major elements in the process of expanding the reserve are already reasonably clear:

—To find means more economical in [*than?*] troops to protect the villages and the major installations;

—To accept an increased degree of risk in the protection of installations not of first importance;

—To induce among the militia and the troops still assigned to protective missions a more aggressive stance, and, by local attacks on the Viet-Cong, to reduce Viet-Cong capacity and freedom to mount local raids.

—To build up as rapidly as possible, via training and re-equipment, the Civil Guard and the Self-Defense Corps so that the army can be progressively released for offensive action. (Appendix A.)

Appendix A suggests as a target that at least 50 per cent of the regular armed force now on static posts should be released for offensive operations. If intelligence can be made to yield useful targets and mobility is provided, a force of this kind could radically reduce the Viet-Cong menace. This would constitute a force of some 70,000 men. Whether this force can be freed for RVNAF offensive operations without unacceptable risk to the population and essential installations remains to be seen.

In addition to measures taken by the Vietnamese to improve their reserve position, it is an evident requirement that the United States review quick action contingency plans to move into Vietnam, should the scale of the Vietnam offensive radically increase at a time when Vietnamese reserves are inadequate to cope with it. Such action might be designed to take over responsibility for the security of certain relatively quiet areas, if the battle remained at the guerrilla level, or to fight the Communists if open war were attempted.

Training

It is our clear impression (Appendix A) that, by and large, training and equipment of the Vietnamese armed forces are still too heavily weighted toward conventional military operations. There has undoubtedly been a shift towards guerrilla and counter-guerrilla training, but it has not gone far enough. Even the Rangers are not adequately trained or equipped for sustained jungle warfare. MAAG

must use its influence steadily and strongly towards increasing the component of counter-guerrilla training at all levels in the Vietnamese armed forces.

The Vietnamese require U.S. assistance in training at all levels, from the War College down. They are constantly faced with the painful choice of allocating good young soldiers either to combat units or to instruction. In both areas the need is great. Given the acuteness of the crisis, we must be prepared to ease this choice by the generous provision of U.S. instructors.

As a first priority, the training of the Civil Guards should be accelerated. About 20 per cent of this force has passed through infantry training, and the results are encouraging. However, the retrained Civil Guards will not be able to operate at full efficiency until the grave shortage of officers and NCO's in the Civil Guards is corrected (Appendix A). To help fill this gap as well as to encourage the Civil Guards to undertake more aggressive tactics, including night patrolling, we should consider assigning MAAG officers and, in key areas, special forces teams to work with the Civil Guards on whose increased efficiency the possibility of generating an army reserve partially depends.

It should also be noted that the cost to the GVN in local currency of training a Civil Guard is substantially less than for a regular soldier; the annual cost to the GVN for a regular, Civil Guard, and a member of the Self-Defense Corps is 28,000 piasters, 17,500 piasters, and 10,800 piasters, respectively.

With respect to the expansion of the Vietnam regular forces beyond the present approved level of 200,000, no decision is immediately required; although we should promptly approve the increase from 170,000 to 200,000 if the GVN accepts its role in a program of the kind proposed here. (Appendix E.) To deploy effectively an expanded regular army will require progress in the inter-related measures outlined in this report. Until the basic problems of intelligence, command and control, and mobility are on their way to solution, a mere expansion in the army will be of little help. Under present circumstances, the Viet-Cong could pin down a much larger army than Saigon now commands. But to cover the transitional period, the expansion to 200,000 is necessary.

Taking the Offensive

The object of these proposals, as a whole, is, of course, to permit the ARVN to assume an effective offensive against the Viet-Cong. An offensive campaign in Vietnam involves a number of different elements:

—The widespread development of an offensive initiative at the local level.

—The development of an offensive against infiltration and infiltrators in the plateau area via the Frontier Ranger Force (Appendix F) and the Clandestine Action Service (Appendix I).

—The liquidation of Zone D; the Viet-Cong redoubt on the boundary between I and II Corps; the training areas near the Cambodian frontier, etc.

—The systematic clearing of the Viet-Cong from less firmly held areas; and, above all, learning how to hold an area by a mixture of military and civil measures once it has been swept.

The assumption of the offensive will thus be a many-sided process, involving progress in all the various directions set forth in this report. When the conditions for an offensive are established, a concrete offensive plan might be put into operation, with clear-cut priorities for particular missions, designed systematically, by phases, to clear the country of the Viet-Cong. Planning to this end might well now begin. (Appendix A.)

A Note on the Navy

As indicated in Appendix A–V, the Vietnam Navy is in poor shape, having played only a minor role in counter-insurgency operations. It suffers in extreme form from a lack of proper intelligence and command-control relations to the total effort. A substantial increase in the MAAG advisory effort will be necessary to get this force to play its proper role, as well as a concentrated intelligence enterprise to find for it effective targets.

In the meanwhile, there are urgent naval requirements to be met in coastal and river surveillance and control. Our conclusion is that U.S. Naval and/or Coast Guard forces may need to be moved in to supplement the Vietnamese Navy until it can find its feet.

Research and Development

The U.S.–Vietnam Combat Development and Test Center has been at work for some months. Its objective has been to establish whether various more or less available U.S. technology could assist the Vietnamese in fighting the Viet-Cong. The unit has worked under the usual administrative difficulties attendant upon a new venture, including poor liaison with certain elements of the Vietnamese armed forces. Nevertheless, three significant conclusions have emerged:

—First, current and foreseeable special techniques will offer no quick magic for defeating the Viet-Cong. The basic military, political and administrative problems outlined in this report must be solved with the help of R and D, but not by R and D alone, if the Vietnamese are to win.

—Second, there are a range of limited concrete devices which could assist both militarily and psychologically in the war against the Viet-Cong. These deserve urgent and careful operational consideration, notably the following: the use of chemicals to attack the rice and manioc crop in carefully selected mountain areas where the Viet-Cong buildup depends on their own plantings to supplement a thin local food supply; the rapid expansion in the use of dogs for patrolling; the installation of the village alarm system; and the use of Lazy Dog for attack on certain relatively fixed Viet-Cong targets.

In addition, the possibilities of the AR–15 rifle should be explored as well as of a plastic swamp boat.

A case for their usefulness having been established, the exploitation of these devices should be pushed with great operational vigor on both the American and the Vietnamese sides. (Appendix H.)[12]

The Economic Support of the Counter-Insurgency Plan

Given the fact that we do not yet know how much damage the flood will cause, it is impossible to form a clear view of the approximate total level of the U.S. aid to Vietnam over the coming year. Nevertheless, certain basic propositions about the Vietnamese economy and the relation of economic aid to this program can be asserted with some confidence.

The fundamental economic fact about Vietnam is that the government has exhibited a considerable capacity to execute important projects in the fields of health, education, agriculture, and public works; and the private sector has shown a surprising virility and momentum.

These have been significant stabilizing factors in an otherwise treacherous situation.

The momentum of the Vietnamese economy must be supported for a further technical reason. As pointed out in Appendix D, the conduct of war against the Viet-Cong requires an increasing supply of local currency. That currency cannot be generated merely by giving the Vietnamese dollars. It would be counter-productive if our dollars should be used for the buildup of monetary reserves or unused pipelines, for luxury imports, or for the imported commodities which compete with their rapidly growing private industrial sector. The problem is, therefore, to design a program of aid which will generate local currency while encouraging civil domestic enterprises which support the total GVN effort.

With respect to the private sector, the most promising way to do this is to increase the import of capital goods for industrial development. With respect to government projects, the GVN must

[12] Appendix H, which deals with research and development matters, is not printed.

devise measures which generate local currencies in conjunction with government projects. Appendix D suggests a series of such projects where the local currency component might be raised by public bond issues. This appears the principal new device by which the paradox could be ended in which only private sector projects supported by the United States develop local currency for the GVN budget.

In addition, it is clear that the Vietnamese must press forward with their present considerable improvements in tax collection. Further, in time, the Vietnamese must move on from the exchange rate arrangements to which they have agreed in principle but which are not yet in force—which would yield an average of 74 piasters (including customs duties) to the dollar—to a more straightforward exchange rate of about 80 (plus customs duties).

On the U.S. side, we must be prepared to provide whatever level of dollar aid may be necessary if we are assured that the dollar aid is being used for productive purposes which support the total effort.

Some of the concrete projects which USOM should support which are directly related to the counter-insurgency plan are the following: the feeder road program; development, if proved feasible, of a TV system around Saigon, which would link government and people more closely in a crucial region; push to completion the present plans for the Vietnamese radio system, including provision for widespread distribution of cheap battery-operated receiving sets; support for the Montagnard program; village communications. In addition it would be appropriate for USOM to join with our MAAG and the Vietnamese in considering systematically the civil action component required if areas cleared of the Viet-Cong are to be consolidated. Operations in the flood areas should give an opportunity to learn in a practical way how this might be done.

The Flood

The present flood is a disaster, enveloping two provinces and substantial portions of two others; but it is, at the same time, a major opportunity for the Vietnamese and for the joint U.S.–Vietnam partnership which this report proposes.

In general it offers to the GVN a chance to mobilize all anti-communist elements in a common constructive national effort. For the United States it offers an opportunity to introduce limited but still meaningful military forces to assist in the emergency and reconstruction effort, making available within the country for further use precisely the types of engineering forces which the logistics part of Appendix A recommends.

Although the exact contours of the job cannot be discerned until the flood waters recede, it is clear that a reconstruction effort will be required for many months. This effort offers to the Vietnamese government an opportunity to get closer to the people in the villages in an important southern area and to see if it cannot reconstruct the area with military and civil arrangements which prevent the re-entry on a large scale of the Viet-Cong. In a sense the flood is a sweep; and the problem is to consolidate after the sweep.

The presence of American military forces in the area should also give us an opportunity to work intensively with the Civil Guards and with other local military elements and to explore the possibility of suffusing them with an offensive spirit and tactics.

The introduction in this area of substantial American forces raises, of course, the problem of their protection. The precise nature of the risks run can only be assessed on the spot by the local U.S. commander. It is evident that a certain risk will be run of daytime sniping and ambush and of night raids. With intensive cooperation with the local military and militia and certain elementary precautions, these risks appear capable of control. The precise techniques for dealing with these risks must rest with the Task Force Commander; but he should be supplied with units and other resources required to do the job.

Although further staff work will be required to assess the size and composition of an appropriate U.S. flood reconstruction force, we would now envisage a unit of perhaps 8000 men.

Contingencies

The U.S. action proposed in this report—involving as it does the overt lifting of the MAAG ceiling, substantial encadrement and the introduction of limited U.S. forces—requires that the United States also prepare for contingencies that might arise from the enemy's reaction. The initiative proposed here should not be undertaken unless we are prepared to deal with any escalation the communists might choose to impose. Specifically we must be prepared to act swiftly under these three circumstances: an attempt to seize and to hold the Pleiku-Kontum area; a political crisis in which the communists might attempt to use their forces around Saigon to capture the city in the midst of local confusion; an undertaking of overt major hostilities by North Vietnam.

As noted earlier, the present contingency plans of CINCPAC must embrace the possibility both of a resumption of the communist offensive in Laos and these Vietnamese contingency situations. Taken together, the contingencies in Southeast Asia which we would presently choose to meet without the use of nuclear weapons appear

to require somewhat more balanced ground, naval, and air strength in reserve in the U.S. than we now have available, so long as we maintain the allocation of the six divisions for the Berlin crisis.

Therefore, one of the major issues raised by this report is the need to develop the reserve strength in the U.S. establishment required to cover action in Southeast Asia up to the nuclear threshold in that area, as it is now envisaged. The call up of additional support forces may be required.

In our view, nothing is more calculated to sober the enemy and to discourage escalation in the face of the limited initiatives proposed here than the knowledge that the United States has prepared itself soundly to deal with aggression in Southeast Asia at any level.

Appendix A

Paper Prepared by the Military Committee of the Taylor Mission [13]

MILITARY APPENDIX

[Here follow Sections I—General Statement; II—Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces; III—Republic of Vietnam Army; IV—Republic of Vietnam Navy; V—Republic of Vietnam Air Force; VI—Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps; VII—Intelligence; and VIII—Logistics.]

IX. Summary

In summary, it is the consensus of the military committee that intervention under SEATO or U.S. plans is the best means of saving SVN and indeed, all of Southeast Asia. Should this prove impossible for non-military reasons we consider there are two general ways in which the combat effectiveness of RVNAF can be increased substantially. The first and most immediate requirement is to assure that GVN makes maximum effective use of its current resources. Its present conduct of military operations leaves much to be desired. By taking certain corrective measures and developing more effective

[13] Top Secret. On the page preceding the appendices is the following typewritten note: "The views expressed in the following Appendices are those of the respective authors. They have contributed substantially to the conclusions expressed in the two preceding papers and, evidently, reflect a broad consensus; but no effort was made to adjust the various perspectives represented in the several sections of the report." Although the text indicates that the paper was written by the military committee, the composition of this committee has not been determined.

procedures, it is our opinion that the combat effectiveness of RVNAF could be improved by an estimated 25 to 40 percent. The second method involves determining reasonable courses of action within United States resources short of military intervention or direct combat support by air and naval combat elements which can appreciably improve both the immediate and long term fighting capabilities of the RVNAF.

We feel that rapid approval and implementation of the following recommendations will improve the combat capabilities of the RVNAF, upset the Communist timetable and prevent a rapid take-over in SVN by Communist forces:

a. Intelligence

(1) One intelligence agency be designated as a central control point for direction, collection, interpretation, collation, and dissemination of all intelligence. (Detailed recommendations are contained in Intelligence Section of military appendix.)

b. Command and Control

(1) That the U.S. Government insist that a single inviolate chain of command be established and practiced. This must include the removal of Province Chiefs from the chain of command.

(2) That the Vietnamese Joint General Staff and Organization be reworked to provide for proportionate service representation to include the seating of all service chiefs as members.

(3) That special efforts be made at the highest USG levels to compel President Diem to adhere to an effective chain of command and to cooperate more fully with the United States in the combined efforts of the two governments to forestall the Communist threat to SVN.

c. National Planning

(1) An effective national plan for counter-insurgency be developed and systematically and effectively implemented.

d. Other

(1) That the U.S. provide RVNAF with additional helicopter and fixed-wing airlift as required, consistent with the maintenance of essential U.S. military posture worldwide.

(2) That projects aimed toward increased mobility to include road and small airstrip construction, and communications for more effective response and control be undertaken.

The foregoing broad recommendations are considered of primary importance. Of only slightly less stature are those below that require early action. It is recommended that:

(1) The general welfare of the enlisted man, to include diet, pay, promotion, leave and awards, be greatly improved at once.

(2) A crash program be implemented to train officers and NCO's in adequate numbers to provide a solid base for accelerating the increase of RVNAF forces.

(3) MAAG advisors participate in all planning and operations.

(4) Resources be relocated as necessary throughout the RVNAF to provide each service the means to increase its effectiveness and morale.

(5) Much greater emphasis be placed on indoctrination of the individual Vietnamese soldier through means of political action officers assigned down to company level to conduct continuous and vigorous instruction designed to stimulate the individual soldier to fight.

Appendix B

Memorandum From the Chairman of the Vietnam Task Force (Cottrell) to the President's Military Representative (Taylor) [14]

Bangkok, October 27, 1961.

SUBJECT

Viet-Nam

Recommendations.

1. The Diem regime is not organized nor operated sufficiently well to meet the Communist threat successfully. A new response must be developed.

2. Given the virtual impossibility of changing perceptibly the basic weaknesses of Ngo Dinh Diem, and in view of our past unsuccessful efforts to reform the GVN from the top down, we should now direct our major efforts from the bottom up, and supply all effective kinds of military and economic aid.

3. Since it is an open question whether the GVN can succeed even with U.S. assistance, it would be a mistake for the U.S. to commit itself irrevocably to the defeat of the Communists in SVN. [15]

[14] Secret.

[15] A handwritten note at this point reads: "This writer later has inconsistent observations, it must be said."

4. Since U.S. combat troops of division size cannot be employed effectively, they should not be introduced at this stage, despite the short range favorable psychological lift it would give the GVN.

5. U.S. combat forces of CINCPAC's command should be maintained in their present state of readiness for employment in SVN if the present guerrilla war evolves into a conventional type operation.

6. The world should continue to be impressed that this situation of overt DRV aggression, below the level of conventional warfare, and [*sic*] must be stopped in the best interest of every free nation.

7. If the combined U.S.–GVN efforts are insufficient to reverse the trend, we should then move to the "Rostow Plan" of applying graduated punitive measures on the DRV with weapons of our choosing.

The Immediate Threat.

The best intelligence we now have reveals a pattern of well organized supply points for infiltrators, much like the Civil War "underground railway", from the 17th parallel roughly through the center of Viet Nam to the South. It also reveals similar points through Laos into SVN re-routing centers. Infiltrators move with almost no opposition or detection to points of concentration, where with local recruits they are organized for attacks, mainly at this stage on poorly defended villages and farms.

The curve of Viet Cong organization, communication and combat effectiveness is apparently rising sharply in contrast to the slower rising curve of effectiveness of the GVN Armed Forces.

The conclusion is that unless this trend is reversed, the Viet Cong will ultimately destroy the GVN, moving from control of villages, to districts, provinces and finally to attack the Armed Forces.

Considerations Affecting U.S. Assistance to the GVN.

Certain conditions inherent in the situation must be recognized in any consideration of what kinds of U.S. assistance can be effective.

1. The Communist operation starts from the lowest social level—the villages. The battle must be joined and won at this point. If not, the Communists will ultimately control all but the relatively few areas of strong military concentrations. Foreign military forces cannot themselves win the battle at the village level. Therefore, the primary responsibility for saving the country must rest with the GVN.

2. For the above reason, the U.S. should *assist* the GVN. This rules out any treaty or pact which either shifts ultimate responsibili-

ty to the U.S., or engages any full U.S. commitment to eliminate the Viet Cong threat.

3. U.S. responsibility without control would be disastrous. Although control over SVN forces, as in Korea, might theoretically be possible, the Communist attack on VN is radically different from the attack on Korea. If this were a situation in which the chances were good that application of U.S. military force could solve the problem, then responsibility and control might be desirable. But it is not, so U.S. control should not be sought.

Approaches.

The ways we can assist the GVN successfully are governed by certain characteristics of the Diem regime, which must be recognized so long as Diem remains in power.

1. Diem, like Sukarno, Rhee, and Chiang is cast in the mold of an oriental despot, and cannot be "brought around" by threats, or insistence on adoption of purely Western concepts. To be successful, the approaches must be made on the plane of advisors, not as adversaries, with emphasis on Diem's primary responsibility and control.

2. Diem, having been subject to military coups, cannot be expected to delegate concentrated authority to the military. Ways must be found to solve the military problem without insistence on full delegation, no matter how desirable or necessary delegation may be.

3. Diem is not a planner, in the Western sense. He avoids elaborate paper plans. Speculation on the reasons are many, but the fact remains. Therefore, the U.S. should not insist on national plans as a prerequisite to any assistance. Military plans might be forthcoming, albeit painfully, from military sources.

4. Diem is not a good administrator, in the Western sense. In the oriental despotic tradition, he rules everything from his own desk. Suggestions for radically changing this pattern run contrary to Diem's basic nature and can be suggested, but should not be set forth as the conditions of U.S. assistance.

5. Our history of dealing with Diem makes it quite clear that a time lag must be anticipated between Diem's acceptance of a foreign proposal, and his fulfillment, if the action depends solely upon the GVN. In the present situation, time is of the essence, and fast action is required on many fronts, but GVN action is always slow and many times incomplete.

Answers to Certain Political Questions.

1. The stability of Diem's regime is roughly proportionate to the success of the military in controlling the Viet Cong threat. Since 1955, when Diem took over from Bao Dai, his regime has survived constant threats of varied intensity from religious sects, villagers, the intellectuals, government offices and the military. At the present moment, the most serious threat is posed by military officers, who might combine at any time with government officials to depose Diem. Whether they move or not will be largely conditioned by their estimate of whether they can win against the Viet Cong under the Diem regime, or whether they believe a new regime is indispensible to victory. If successful operations are registered against the Viet Cong, the threat of a coup will recede.

2. Bearing in mind the above limitations on corrective measures to modify the Diem regime, the political base for the counter-insurgency program could be improved *if* Diem would use the already created Internal Security Council. This body includes the President, Vice-President, Ministers of Interior and Information, the Assistant Secretary of State for Defense, the Chief of the ARVN Joint Staff, and other senior security officials.

The base could also be improved by an overall GVN national plan, integrating all fields of activity related to the security problem.

A comprehensive phased military plan is now in preparation, although apparently it is being done reluctantly.

It must be recognized that these administrative changes and planning will proceed slowly, if at all.

3. The internal political effects of introducing U.S. Forces should be considered. On the one hand, the danger exists that U.S. or SEATO combat forces would be equated in the minds of the villagers with the previous unfortunate French experience. This would be hammered home by the Communists. On the other hand, even opposition parties in the National Assembly have recently expressed a desire for U.S. troops, and the evidence on balance indicates that:

a. Special tailored forces for specific missions of assisting the GVN should produce no violent unfavorable reaction.

b. Larger units of division size could probably be introduced without trouble, but U.S. combat operations against the Viet Cong could raise a host of problems with the villagers.

4. A political settlement in Laos has largely been discounted in advance. GVN officials frankly state that the U.S. has abandoned Laos. They are concerned that the U.S. may abandon SVN when the going gets rough. They are keenly aware of the effect of infiltration from Laos and are certain it cannot be stopped by any weak

"neutral" Laotian government nor by an ICC, no matter how effective. At the same time, a Lao settlement will not cause the GVN to abandon their efforts.

5. A major increase in U.S. military and economic aid would be most welcome to all levels of the people and to the GVN. It would supply further reassurances and proof of U.S. backing. However, this does not mean we should supply it unless it can be used effectively. The greatest effectiveness would be achieved by accelerating the training and equipping of the Civil Guard and the Self Defense Corps if ways can be found to do this—a very difficult problem. Increased economic aid at the village level would produce the greatest impact on the security situation.

6. The principal considerations related to a bilateral treaty were discussed above, and the conclusion drawn against this action. The GVN would naturally welcome, as Thuan said, "such a proof of U.S. real determination to stay with the GVN in its fight". On the other hand, negotiation of such a treaty would represent a direct violation of Article 19 of the Geneva Accords, and ratification by the U.S. Senate would be time consuming at best.

What Should Be Done, and How.

First, while not minimizing the need for coordinated, evaluated intelligence at the national level, it strikes me that the most urgent need is for development of an extensive net in the villages, feeding into the Province Chiefs. The province organization seems to me to be the lowest level at which you can expect quick local reaction—if the SDC and the Civil Guard can be organized to react. Since Diem insists on authority being retained by the Provincial Chiefs, why don't we try to turn this necessity of dealing with them into a virtue, and help these officers do a better job? To my mind, this flows logically from a conviction expressed previously that the battle will be won or lost primarily at the village level. So let's all get down on our bellies to fight the problem from the bottom up rather than entire concentration from the top on down. For years we have been trying unsuccessfully to "reform" the system at the top, while virtually ignoring the "rice roots". We've been erecting various "scare crows" as deterrents to certain kinds of threats, while the gophers have had a field day building underground runways, multiplying, and gnawing away at the roots.

Second, I favor improvement of the intelligence collection and analysis at the national level, and believe the new Evaluation Center should be enlarged.

. . . . . .

Fourth, I think the MAAG "charter" should be amended to permit their resources to be fully exploited in the intelligence field.

Fifth, I think MAAG "section chiefs" should be supplied with intelligence reports pertinent to their work. For example, Captain Easterling of the Navy Section, MAAG, should have the CAS reports on DRV infiltration organizations and operations along the coast.

Sixth, I believe the USOM "charter" should be amended to exploit its natural access to information vital to the security situation. Its personnel should be instructed on the need for an intense intelligence effort and channels should be established for relaying this information to the Evaluation Center.

Joint Survey of Provinces.

I am strongly in favor of this, because it fits with my "village battle" concept. I think it must be done very carefully—not with the attitude of an "inspector general" listing all the faults of the Province Chief and his organization, but as a friendly, constructive listing of what each Province Chief needs to do his job better. The fact that there are some Province Chiefs who have done excellent jobs is proof that it can be done. I trust that these successful tactics and techniques can be transplanted. I would hope the survey teams could study and be briefed on these tactics before they undertake their surveys. The composition of these survey teams is, of course, something to be decided locally, but if I were doing it, I would *not* send large delegations. Ideally, a team should be one U.S. officer and one GVN. At maximum, it should be two of each in the military and intelligence fields. One team should be sent to each Corps area. Later, if the results are favorable, USOM and USIS people could visit the provinces.

After the surveys, we should "break our back" to supply what is needed. If we could get a MAAG advisor to the Civil Guard and an intelligence man assigned at each Province Chief level, I think it would greatly facilitate an effort from the bottom up. It may be a problem to find 38 French speaking officers of each type, but I think the effort should be made—perhaps by sending present MAAG officers out to the field on these jobs and replacing them with fresh officers from CONUS.

General Lansdale as Advisor to Diem.

I heartily endorse this idea. Earlier in this paper I pointed out the limitations we face in "reforming" Diem. Any asset we can use to influence him should be applied. The fact that Diem has asked for his services is an ideal entree. Because of the confidence Diem has in Lansdale, some progress might be registered from the top down.

Appendix C

Memorandum From William J. Jorden of the Policy Planning Council to the President's Military Representative (Taylor) [16]

Baguio, October 30, 1961.

SUBJECT

The Political Situation in South Viet Nam

SUMMARY

I. The Problem.

Pressures for political and administrative change in South Viet Nam have reached the explosion point. Without some badly needed reforms, it is unlikely that any program of assistance to that country can be fully effective.

II. Conclusions.

The U.S. can pursue a variety of courses ranging from giving full and unquestioning support to the present Government in Saigon, to engineering a coup against the Diem regime.

III. Recommendations.

A. We should identify ourselves with the people of Viet Nam and with their problems rather than with a man or a regime.

B. There should be an early U.S.–SVN meeting at a high level at which U.S. thoughts on the necessity of administrative changes are expressed with firmness.

[16] Secret.

C. We should encourage formation of a National Emergency Council in South Viet Nam, composed of the most able and talented Vietnamese, to bear the main burden of policy making.

D. U.S. advisers of great tact and competence should be selected to work with key Vietnamese agencies, including the Presidency and the NEC.

E. The purpose of these advisers should be to guide, encourage and expedite, not to dictate.

Any program of assistance to South Viet Nam must take into consideration that country's internal political situation and its administrative structure. This is true for two reasons: first, because the pressures now at work appear certain to erupt into demands for a change, whether by means of a coup or through some less drastic method. Second, there is good reason to think that without some badly needed reforms, any program of military or economic aid from the United States will be less than fully effective.

This confronts the United States with a choice: to give its full backing to President Diem and do what it can to frustrate any moves to alter the present system; to stay neutral and hope that the changes that come will be orderly and constructive; to encourage changes that might be acceptable to both sides, i.e., the President and his critics; to back administrative changes that would reduce sharply the role of the President and his family in the day-to-day conduct of governmental affairs; to back a coup that would remove Diem from power.

The situation provides an opportunity for the United States to stand once again for change in this part of the world, to press for measures that are both efficient and more democratic. We must identify ourselves with the people of Viet Nam and with their aspirations, not with a man or an administration. We must do what we can to help release the tremendous energy, ability and idealism that exist in Viet Nam. We must suggest, not demand; we must advise, not dictate; but we must not hesitate to stand for the things that we and the Vietnamese know to be worthwhile and just in the conduct of political affairs.

The Present Situation.

One after another, Vietnamese officials, military men and ordinary citizens spoke to me of the situation in their country as "grave" and "deteriorating". They are distressed at the evidence of growing Viet Cong successes. They have lost confidence in President Diem and in his leadership. Men who only one or two months ago would have hesitated to say anything critical of Diem, now explode in angry denunciation of the man, his family, and his methods.

There is near paralysis in some areas of administration. Small decisions that would be handled by minor officials in one of the ministries of most governments are taken to the Presidency for personal approval by Diem or one of his top advisers. Major decisions sometimes go unconsidered for days or weeks. Ministers are reduced to the role of expediters and "yes men". Men with no elective or even appointive office often have more influence and power than the recognized officials.

Many men of intelligence and ability have been kept out of government or been forced to resign if their complete loyalty to the President came into doubt. The National Assembly has become a rubber stamp for the President's measures. Elections are a meaningless exercise that can only produce contempt for the democratic process.

A chance remark in a cafe can produce a jail sentence. Those who express political opposition are harassed. Men are held indefinitely without indictment or even the placing of charges. One member of the National Assembly has been in jail for almost a year without his legislative immunity from arrest having been lifted.

The role of the President's family is well-enough known to require little elaboration. Brother Nhu holds power second only to that of Diem himself. Brother Can rules the northern provinces like an oriental satrapy from his base in Hue. Archbishop Thuc, as the President's elder, is listened to respectfully by the President. Luyen, Ambassador in London, returns to Saigon regularly to "mend his fences" and check on his organization. Madame Nhu presides over the women of South Viet Nam like an Empress.

The activities of the brothers are a source of deep resentment among people at every level. The Communists have used this resentment skillfully in their propaganda against the regime. Many of the allegations made against members of the Diem family are true; many are false. What matters in this context is what is believed.

Intrigue, nepotism and even corruption might be accepted, for a time, if combined with efficiency and visible progress. When they accompany administrative paralysis and steady deterioration, they become intolerable.

All of this has produced a steadily mounting demand for change. Even persons long loyal to Diem and included in his official family now believe that South Viet Nam can get out of the present morass only if there is early and drastic revision at the top. They admit that a series of dramatic political and military successes might—just might—alter the present mood somewhat. But they see little or no chance for that kind of success unless the Government's decision-making and administrative apparatus is reorganized first.

The Vietnamese would like to see this kind of change come peacefully and with U.S. encouragement. There are many who believe, in fact, that it can come peacefully only if it is urged by the U.S. Government. If change does not come in an orderly way, it will almost certainly come through forceful means carried out by an alliance of political and military elements.

The Dangers

It is obvious that the present tense situation could produce violence and a period of serious internal confusion. It could divide the Army as well as the bureaucratic machine. The Communists can be expected to move swiftly in any such situation, combining military with political moves aimed at a quick takeover. At best, an attempted coup that failed would produce retaliation that would deprive Viet Nam further of some of its best brains and talents.

The United States would face a serious dilemma should violence erupt. Given the large and growing U.S. involvement in Viet Nam, we would almost certainly have to intervene directly. This would produce resentment on one side or the other, perhaps both, and would expose us to large-scale criticism in other countries.

These are dangers, too, in the continuation of the present uneasy situation. It means appalling waste in terms of energy, ability, and patriotism. The prevailing administrative stagnation means that any new program of aid will be less than fully effective. It means, too, that the U.S. becomes increasingly identified with an unpopular and ineffective regime.

The Choices

The arguments in favor of change, almost any change, are impressive. The situation in South Viet Nam is far too serious to permit that country the luxury of depriving itself of any of its available skills, intelligence, imagination, and hope. Those committed to helping the Vietnamese in this critical hour have an equal interest in seeing that everything that can contribute to victory is done.

The choices for the U.S. Government in this situation were listed earlier. My judgement of those choices follows:

1. To give unquestioned backing to Diem and to try to frustrate any pressures for change in his method of rule is to court disaster.

2. To stay neutral and hope for the best means an open invitation to an explosion that would probably benefit the Communists more than anyone else.

3. We are obliged, I think, to encourage in a variety of ways reforms in administration, from the highest level to the villages, that will be acceptable to both the President and his critics.

4. If this kind of compromise approach fails to produce promising results, if reforms are frustrated by backsliding into old ways and attitudes, if the "back door" continues as the preferred way to influence, if criticism produces harassment, then we must consider backing changes that would reduce sharply the role of the President and would alter his status to that of figurehead and symbol.

5. Engineering or backing a coup involves large risks in both the local situation and in the broader framework of world opinion. It is not something we do well. It has little to recommend itself.

Specific Recommendations

1. As a matter of general policy, we should avoid identification of President Diem or his regime as the focus of U.S. policy. Our public concern should always be with the people of Viet Nam, with their problems, and their aspirations.

2. There should be an early meeting either between President Diem and a carefully selected personal representative of President Kennedy, or between President Kennedy and a high-ranking personal representative of President Diem, possibly his brother Nhu. This meeting should be used to outline U.S. thoughts and attitudes on the problem of administrative reform. The urgent need for delegation of authority and for inclusion of Viet Nam's best talents in public office should be stressed.

3. Using the recent declaration of a national emergency in South Viet Nam as a lever, we should press for immediate formation of a top-level National Emergency Council that would include representatives of the leading Government organizations such as Defense, Budget, Foreign Affairs, and Internal Security. This body would have the combined function of recommending actions and programs to the President and assuring that top-level decisions are carried out.

4. In agreement with the Vietnamese Government, a group of highly qualified (by talent as well as temperament) Americans should be selected to work with key Government organs, including the Presidency and the proposed National Emergency Council. They could serve an invaluable function as friendly advisers and expediters.

5. The purpose of these advisers would not be to impose our ways or methods or political institutions. Rather it would be to encourage the Vietnamese to find their own solutions within the broad framework of principles and ideals which we share. They should promote the idea of selection on the basis of ability and advancement on the basis of merit. They could stimulate the assumption and delegation of authority at all levels. By example and by guidance they could promote many elements in political adminis-

tration that are essential to success and that now are missing in the governmental structure of South Viet Nam.

Appendix D

Paper Prepared by the Members of the Taylor Mission [17]

ECONOMIC AID TO VIET NAM

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

The economy of Vietnam is progressing. Economic factors are probably not a very important cause of the current crisis. Nevertheless, the economic programs can and should be used to support the counter-insurgency. Specifically it is recommended that:

A. The proposed level of commercial aid of $140 million be negotiated with the Vietnamese as soon as possible.

B. The Vietnamese be assured that the U.S. will make every effort to support all worthwhile projects which contribute to the solution of the immediate crisis.

C. Special efforts be made to expedite those projects which are particularly useful in the short run including village communications, radio broadcasting, village radio receiving sets, special action with Montagnard tribes, the telecommunications system, emergency flood relief, and to the extent desired by the GVN, Agrovilles, Agrohamlets, and feeder roads.

D. Successful projects which contribute to long range economic development be continued if they are not too expensive but in general new starts in this area be deferred for the time being.

E. Long range projects whose effectiveness is being reduced by Viet Cong activity should be reviewed for possible modification or termination.

F. Special efforts be expedited to increase the ability of private enterprise to absorb capital imports into industrial expansion.

[Here follow 16 pages of discussion on four major topics: I. The Economy of Vietnam, II. The Role of Economic Aid, III. Commercial Aid, and IV. Economic Aid to the Public Sector.]

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[17] Confidential. The source text is not dated and has no drafting information.

Appendix E

Paper Prepared by the Members of the Taylor Mission [19]

MAAG AND MILITARY AID

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions:

1. On the whole, the Military Assistance Program has been providing military aid to South Vietnam at about the optimum rate of absorption by the RVNAF. Deficiencies in RVNAF command and control procedures have resulted in less than optimum usage of MAP equipment, particularly aircraft.

2. The present emergency requires an urgent further increase in the RVNAF. This buildup cannot await the development of a GVN national geographically phased strategic plan for counter-insurgency, although the preparation of such a plan should be pursued vigorously by the GVN.

3. MAAG advisory effort needs to be extended further into the core of the RVNAF, with advisors being provided to smaller units. Intelligence specialist advisors are badly needed. In order to provide the numbers of US personnel required, as well as those with the desired qualifications, special efforts will be required.

4. Additional Military Assistance funds will be required to undertake critical improvements in facilities to support the increased effort required, and to take advantage of technological developments.

Major Recommendations:

1. Waive our previous stipulation that a national geographically phased counter-insurgency plan be prepared before we would support a force increase to 200,000 in order to sustain the present impetus of RVNAF force buildup.

2. Give highest priority to providing MAAG advisory personnel, both in increased numbers and with required qualifications, increasing training of US personnel as necessary.

3. Make available additional military assistance funds to undertake critical improvements in operational and supporting facilities, particularly road, air field and communications facilities, and to take immediate advantage of technological developments.

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[19] Confidential. The source text is not dated and has no drafting information.

[Here follow eight pages of discussion under the following headings: I. General Statement, II. Problem Areas, and III. Recommendations.]

Appendix F

Paper Prepared by the Members of the Taylor Mission [19]

FRONTIER FORCE, VIETNAM

The Problem: To establish a force in Vietnam which will deny the northwest frontier bordering Laos to Communist infiltration and which will have the capability of penetrating Communist dominated areas outside South Vietnam to disrupt Communist lines of communication.

Considerations:

a. The strength, disposition, and intention of the Communist enemy in the frontier area are not known precisely. Reports indicate the 325th North Vietnam (NVN) Division is just north of the 17th Parallel Demarcation Line and the 304th and 324th NVN Divisions are in the vicinity of Route 9, having crossed the border from the the Tchepone Area. The VNA at Kontum believes there are three NVN regiments west of Kontum, towards the border. Since top Vietnamese officials, including President Diem, believe the northwest frontier is a Communist pipeline to the south and east, and there is some confirmation of this belief, it is not known how much of the estimated 8400 Communists in their Interzone V are in the northwest frontier, whether they are in transit elsewhere or are disposed in the area for quick assembly to mount an attack on Kontum.

b. It is known that Communist forces cross the Laos–Vietnam border. Four such routes are known, including Routes 9 and 12. It is possible that other routes could be identified, since they are known to the inhabitants, given better intelligence collection methods in Montagnard tribal areas. One MAAG plan indicated 103 miles of border as "hot," where crossings are most likely; the figure included areas in the south.

c. Without the willing help of the Montagnards, initially in intelligence and later in securing their own areas, any practical denial of the northwest frontier to Communist infiltration becomes almost

[19] Secret. The source text is not dated and has no drafting information.

impossible. There are serious problems to be overcome in gaining Montagnard help. The Communists got to them first, years ago. Communist hard-core political cadres have been living as tribal members in Montagnard villages, at least since 1954. It is estimated that 1700 Montagnards in the II Corps area alone have been recruited by the Viet Cong. The Vietnamese have looked upon the Montagnards as something almost sub-human, and this is known to the Montagnards. On the other hand, the Viet Cong need for food and services apparently has led to increased Communist use of terrorism to get these quickly from the Montagnards. The Montagnards are now seeking weapons for self-protection. Americans serving in the High Plateau and French missionaries long resident there believe the Montagnards should be armed for village self-defense and can be used far more extensively for intelligence collection . . . .

d. General McGarr has expressed concern at the further depletion of Vietnamese divisions to obtain manpower for special units, such as ranger companies. Since special units are manned by volunteers, the drain is in the best manpower, of quality as well as quantity. Divisions which have personnel most familiar with the border terrain are presently stationed in the High Plateau, have the mission of border area defense now, and would be needed to back up any frontier force which would operate as rangers on extended patrols.

e. The present ranger companies have a strength of 132. MAAG officers consider that this should be upped to 142, with the additional strength being used for communications and a mortar section. General "Big" Minh is currently developing a plan to combine two ranger companies into a Mobile Forest Groupement which would create a base area, with a landing strip or cleared area for air drops; extensive patrols would be undertaken from the base area.

f. There is now a total of 86 ranger companies in the ARVN. Of these, 26 have completed unit training. An additional 11 will complete unit training by January 1962. The remainder of the 49 ranger companies, all formed early in 1960 and committed to operations with little or no formal ranger training, will have completed unit training by the end of 1962. There are no current plans to form additional ranger companies.

g. There are four Vietnamese provinces bordering Laos: Quang Tri, Thua Thien, Quang Nam, and Kontum. The first three are in the I Corps military area, and Kontum in the II Corps area. In the MAAG concept of border control, apart from the zone for the 17th Parallel, there are five border patrol zones suggested.

Concept:

a. The command will be known as the Northwest Frontier Force. It will be a component of II Corps, but will operate in both I and II Corps areas, as a special force, with its own distinctive insignia. It will be a force of jungle rangers, teamed with air elements and a special civil section. There will be US encadrement, under a US military chief, with US personnel acting as advisors-collaborators (similar to Army Special Forces operations in Laos). The US encadrement will include both military and civilian personnel, and will have its own communication net.

b. The mission of the Force will be to secure the frontier zone by pacification of the territory on the Vietnamese side of the border and by disrupting the enemy's lines of communication outside the border, through long-range combat patrols. Pacification will employ techniques of attracting the support of the inhabitants in a limited area, as employed successfully before in Vietnam. Pacification includes security screening, establishment of intelligence collection, initiating governmental services and control, then training and arming the villages for self-defense. When an area is secure, the Force will move into the next area for pacification operations, and continue doing so until all Vietnamese territory in the Frontier zone is secure.

c. Each sector of Vietnam in the Frontier zone will be divided into defined areas for pacification, depending upon terrain and inhabitants. Two ranger companies will move into the pacification area, while the third company moves into the next area beyond, as a security screen. As the two companies establish physical security, a civic action civilian unit will move in behind them, establishing working relations with the village council, a dispensary, a school, an information center with a radio receiver, and the unit will then be under the self-help public projects (the first being the construction of a landing strip for eight aircraft, and then feeder roads as required). Public welfare, such as salt and blankets, will be distributed. As the support of the population is won over, they will be readied for self-defense, for intelligence reporting, and enlisted as scouts for patrols.

d. Patrols will enter an area to win over the tribal inhabitants, obtain information of the location of enemy elements in the area, and then seek out the enemy to destroy him. Initial contact with the enemy will be to gain information about him, which will be promptly reported by radio. The patrol commander will make the decision on whether to attack, using hunter-killer tactics, to call up an air strike and follow it by attack, or to call up additional forces for the attack.

e. The Northwest Frontier Force operation calls for close military-civilian teamwork, to enlist the support of the overwhelming majority of the Montagnards and to make the entire frontier zone a hostile area to Communist incursions. This will require a definite change in Vietnamese attitude towards and relations with the Montagnards. The Civic Action civilian unit will have a Vietnamese cadre, but be composed of two-thirds Montagnards as rapidly as they can be screened and trained.

f. In Kontum province, operations will be assisted by the Djarai (Montagnard) scouts now being recruited. This will be accomplished by the II Corps Commander.

Force:

a. *Vietnamese Military*

Headquarters/Operations Center at Kontum.

Reserve strike force, of five ranger companies, strengthened to 142, at Kontum.

Air force composite squadron at Kontum, under Frontier Force Operational control.

Special Weapons Unit, for field use of CDTC equipment, at Kontum.

Three long-range patrol ranger companies, based at Kontum.

Five Sector Headquarters/Operations Centers, one for each pacification sector.

Fifteen ranger companies, strengthened to 142, for pacification of the Vietnamese side of the Frontier zone (divided into five sectors, with three companies per sector).

The 23 ranger companies will be withdrawn from the 59 companies now assigned to the III Corps area. Other military personnel will be provided from throughout the RVNAF, to be replaced as the 30,000 force increase is implemented.

b. *Vietnamese Civilian (Civic Action)*

Headquarters/Operations Center at Kontum, with the Chief of the Civic Action Unit being Deputy to the Frontier Force Commander.

Five Civic Action units, one for each pacification sector, consisting of public health, welfare, information (radio, motion pictures), education, and public works (an engineer element for helping build air strips).

Four small Civic Action Units, one stationed with each province chief, for coordination of all civil operations.

c. *U.S. Personnel*

At Kontum, Chief of the U.S. element, who also will act as collaborator-advisor to the Commander of the Frontier Force. He will have a team of specialists who will act as collaborator-advisors to the Vietnamese in running the intelligence/operations center, in logistical support, and for training of Montagnards in self-defense. A

small U.S. element for administrative support of U.S. operations in the Frontier Zone will be under his command, since base facilities will be needed to support temporarily assigned specialists from the CDTC, MAAG, . . . , USOM, and USIS.

Small U.S. liaison elements, for advice and collaboration on Frontier Force operations, will be established at II Corps and Field Command.

One "cell" of the 4400th CCTS will be stationed with the Vietnamese Air Force squadron in the Kontum area.

One split FA team (six men, USA Special Forces) will be stationed with each ranger company. One FB team will be stationed with each pacification sector and with the long-range patrol unit.

One U.S. Foreign Service Officer will be the Political Deputy to the Chief, U.S. Element, at Kontum, to run the civilian portion of the U.S. team, and to act as advisor-collaborator with the Regional delegate and the four Province Chiefs. He will have a small staff of . . . , USIS, and USOM personnel who will be field workers, visiting their Vietnamese opposite numbers in the pacification sectors and in the provincial capitals, where they will act as advisors-collaborators with the Vietnamese. Chief MAAG will have over-all responsibility for direction of the U.S. effort.

[Appendix G]

Memorandum From the Secretary of Defense's Assistant for Special Operations (Lansdale) to the President's Military Representative (Taylor) [20]

SUBJECT

Summary of Recommendations

Declaration of Sub-Limited War. In order to meet the Communist threat adequately, the U.S. needs a way of action short of war but more dynamic than merely the bolstering of peacetime measures. The situation in Vietnam cries for something better than what we have been doing. So, my recommendation was that the U.S. find the way to declare and support a sub-limited war in Vietnam. This can be done by Presidential proclamation, a Congressional supporting act, and a new streamlined organization within the Executive, headed by a Presidential Assistant to upgrade its authority and decisiveness.

U.S. Collaborators-Advisors. The heavy bureaucratic machinery of the Vietnamese government is not working effectively. Heeding the lesson of Laos, where some U.S. military are living and working with the RLA as a friendly encadrement, the U.S. should apply an

[20] Secret. The source text is not dated.

improved version in Vietnam. There should be a U.S. political-psychological-military-economic encadrement in Vietnam. The concept is of a U.S. team with its own chief and its own radio communications to all U.S. elements in Vietnam. Individual Americans would act as advisor-collaborators at the key decision points in the top of the Vietnamese government. Military-civilian teams would work with Vietnamese organizations at critical trouble spots in the field. When one trouble spot is cleared up, the field team can be moved to the next trouble area. The work in a trouble spot would be what the Vietnamese call pacification; this means that the military establishes physical security, with civic action (health, welfare, information, education, etc.) teams following on the heels of the troops. Self-defense is organized and activated. When the area is secure, (able to defend itself against all but large enemy units) the U.S. team moves out. Vietnamese forces encadred can either be transferred to the next trouble zone or be released for other duties.

Northwest Frontier Force. The border zone of Laos is now an area of Viet-Cong infiltration into Vietnam from the Laos panhandle. To meet this, a Northwest Frontier Force (a ranger force supported by air and civic action teams) should be created. It will have a long-range patrol element to strike the Viet-Cong lines of communication in Laos and a pacification (military-civilian) team for the frontier zone inside Vietnam. Pacification areas will be designed to fit inhabitants and terrain. Ranger teams, with prompt civic action followup, will attract the support of Montagnard tribes and establish a capability for self-defense. The teams will then move to the next pacification area, and so continue until the whole frontier zone is capable of resisting Viet-Cong infiltration and is keeping the Vietnamese promptly informed of all Viet-Cong activities in the area. U.S. encadrement will include Special Forces (down to company level), Jungle Jim (to ensure effective air support), a Foreign Service officer (deputy to the military commander to run the civilian side and to collaborate with regional delegates and province chiefs), and . . . USOM, and USIS personnel to collaborate with Vietnamese civic action/intelligence operations.

"Human Defoliation." As an alternate to the strip-sectioning of Zone D by chemical defoliants, it is recommended that consideration be given to awarding a lumber concession in Zone D to a Chinese Nationalist commercial firm. The firm can be a non-profit corporation, employing ChiNat veterans (ages 35–40) who could be armed for self-defense (or game hunting). The hardwoods in Zone D are well located for profitable exploitation; in fact, its lumber would have a ready market in Vietnam as well as elsewhere; if desired, it could be a joint operation with Vietnamese veterans. When large Viet-Cong forces are met, precise intelligence would be given to the

RVNAF for a strike at the enemy. The lumbermen could take care of smaller enemy units themselves. Such an operation would have further benefits in uplifting morale in Formosa, even though a cover-civilian activity, and resolve part of the problems now posed by these veterans.

General

Vietnam is dangerously far down the road to a Communist takeover, against the will of its people. Since my visit last January, the situation appears to have grown more critical, despite generous U.S. help. President Diem believes that the key moment which will determine the future is between now and Christmas.

As in any society under great stress, some cracks have appeared. The most apparent one during our visit was the very human one of looking for somebody else to blame for the situation. Big Minh's rather desperate comments to you were an example. This same type of comment was prevalent in many other quarters, including some in which Big Minh was the target. Mistrust, jealousy, and the shock of Communist savagery have contributed to making a none-too-certain government bureaucracy even more unsure of itself. Pride and self-protection still cover this unsureness, but the cover is wearing thin.

Yet, what is happening is against the will of the people. Communist terrorism has brought compliance; Communist assurance of victory has induced hopelessness. This can be changed. Given the means to fight back and some hope in the future of a Free Vietnam, the people will start responding. With popular support, and with an infusion of new spirit in the government and the armed forces, a turn can still be made against what now looks like an inevitable Communist takeover.

It is time that we in the free world got angry about what is happening in Vietnam and about what is happening elsewhere in Southeast Asia. With our anger, there should come a deep commitment to stop the Communists in their tracks and hit back hard. Frankly, there are a lot of Americans who are angry and are willing to be committed to victory in this struggle. But, there is no place and no means by which they can join up to strike a blow for liberty. Certainly there are dedicated Americans in Vietnam now who would like nothing better than to give the Communists a licking. They are prevented from doing so by our self-imposed restrictions of a peace time governmental machinery, made clumsy by its complexity, which has been jury-rigged to meet a critical situation when it really needed to be revamped to meet a new kind of war.

A new infusion of spirit is needed in Vietnam. With new spirit, the way will be opened to defeat the Communists, even though the

way probably will be long and hard. This spirit will come only through dedicated action. Both the Vietnamese and the Americans need to be freed to undertake such dedicated action.

The U.S. Role

A humanitarian task force of U.S. military to help in the flood areas of Vietnam probably will result in enough psychological effect and enough physical security in its zone of operation to delay the Communist time-table. The Communists will be forced to change their strategy and this takes time. Thus, it would be wise for us to recognize that such a task force effort is a way of buying some badly needed time. We then should determine how best to use the time purchased at such great effort.

There is a valuable lesson to be learned from our experience in Laos. Regardless of the political outcome, we did have a moment when circumstances forced us to do the right thing in part, on the spot, in the military sector. This right action was the encadrement of the Lao armed forces with dedicated American advisors, who acted as brotherly collaborators, and who had their own communications from the field to headquarters, permitting realistic and knowledgeable action to be taken by the U.S. military at each level and where needed. If this had been done earlier, and in the political, economic, and information sectors as well as the military, Laos might well have stood up to the Communist attack and have made far better use of all its resources.

Thus, in Vietnam, with the time bought by a humanitarian U.S. military task force in the flood area, and by the continuing work of the present U.S. organizations in Vietnam, we should phase in a Vietnamese-American partnership for action against the Communists, by a special and temporary encadrement. It will take Americans who are willing to stake all on the outcome, who know their tasks, and who can act with great understanding in collaboration with the Vietnamese.

This U.S. role requires acceptance by the Vietnamese, starting with President Diem, and a new resolution of problems by the United States. Both can be done, if we determine to do so. Applied effectively in Vietnam, we will have found the means of meeting similar Communist threats elsewhere. With proper psychological preparation, including our firm intention of pulling out again as soon as the threat has been overcome, this fuller U.S. role in helping free nations remain free will give a new spark to freedom throughout the world.

The U.S. Structure

The U.S. needs to declare a "sub-limited" war on the Communists in Vietnam and then to wage it successfully. Since such an action is not envisioned by our Constitution, a way of so doing must be found which is consistent with our heritage. The most natural declaration would be a proclamation by the President, which would state U.S. objectives and clearly outline the principles of human liberty involved. The U.S. Congress would vote support of these objectives and principles. Implementing actions would then be carried out by Executive Order.

The executive agency to carry out the President's desires needs realistic consideration. The agency must be able to devote all of its time and energies to the task. It must be elevated high enough to demand and get effective contributions from all U.S. entities, including State and Defense, and be quickly responsive to the Executive will. The present Task Forces have neither the stature nor the permanent personnel required. It would be preferable to have a small task force headed by a Presidential Assistant, with members from each U.S. department and agency assigned to it full-time, with its own channel of communication to the field, with complete control of the budget to counter the emergency in the country involved, and with a clear statement of its priorities in drawing on the men, money, and matériel needed.

For Vietnam, after consideration of the needs elsewhere, such as Berlin, a new Presidential Task Force would be created. It would need small, streamlined counterparts, particularly in State and Defense. It would need an active liaison unit at CINCPAC. In Vietnam, it should act with Presidential authority under the general guidance of the Ambassador, but with its own responsible chief. It would need a small staff in Saigon to see that the U.S. effort is coordinated, to provide an adequate war room for current knowledge of the situation, and to ensure administrative and logistic support. The field group should be looked upon as going into a new type of combat and be so supported, including duty status, discipline, and recognition. In Vietnam, it would be the operations task force.

Paper work between Washington and Saigon should be cut to a minimum. An aircraft should be assigned at the Washington end, for quick trips to Vietnam to get first-hand information and to cut down the need for time in the field which would have to be devoted to reporting and administration.

The operations task force field personnel would operate on two levels. One is at the executive level; the other is at the local trouble spot, such as the northwest frontier.

At the executive level, there should be an American collaborator at each key position in the Vietnamese government where decisive executive action is required. The American would give the firm guidance of a friend to the Vietnamese official in that position, with the American remaining very much in the background and encouraging Vietnamese initiative.

Local trouble spots should be selected for special U.S. effort. The most obvious ones today are the northwest frontier, the sea frontier, and Zone D. There are others, along the Cambodian border, in the Long Hai area, in the center, and so on. Each requires unique treatment, with its own local U.S. task force directed from the U.S. task force in Saigon, with its own communications net, and with its own task goal which would determine its term of deployment. If need be, priorities can be assigned to trouble spots so that they can be cleaned up one by one with the most effective U.S. team possible to concentrate on an area.

While each trouble spot is somewhat different, the local task force is conceived as having a local U.S. director. Under him would be a military team, having an advisor-collaborator with the Vietnamese division commander, a Special Forces team with each battalion, and a Jungle Jim cell to guide Vietnamese air support to the division's operations. U.S. military intelligence, psychological warfare, and civic action personnel would work at division level, to guide the Vietnamese effort. A junior Foreign Service officer would be the advisor-collaborator with each Vietnamese province chief in the trouble area, and would be part of the U.S. communications net. In each province, there would be . . . a USIS information officer to guide the Vietnamese psychological operation and to direct the USIS information center if this is required to bolster the Vietnamese effort, and USOM officers as needed to guide public health, public works, education, and self-help programs.

There is a great deal already in existence in these trouble spots. The local U.S. task force would mostly give it some dynamic spark and direction. In the northwest frontier, this would include a different attitude towards and use of the Montagnard tribes.

In Laos, Special Forces teams are relieved after six months duty in the jungle. General Boyle is in full agreement with this policy, although he believes that the teams in some of the more settled areas could remain longer without relief. In Vietnam, the problems are quite different. A special rest and rehabilitation center could be established in Saigon or Nha Trang, where teams could rest up. In an area such as the northwest frontier, personnel could be rotated for duty with the reserve at Kontum after an extended jungle patrol. It would be smart to establish a similar system for Vietnamese combat forces.

The concept noted above would place American talents and spirit directly into position to be most effective in Vietnam. It would commit them to the action, since Americans would share the hazards of the struggle. A U.S. communications net would bring American "can do" into the Vietnamese scene in a way which could be decisive. Much of the present Vietnamese bickering and hesitancy would disappear as a new sense of direction is given them.

Other Comments

a. *U.S. Presence.* It is believed that the Vietnamese would accept the presence of Americans favorably, if this is done correctly. Included in "doing it correctly" would be an expression of President Diem's desire for such U.S. help, the individual Americans earning their way by friendly devotion to unselfish duty, with exemplary behavior, and a firm understanding of U.S. withdrawal to let the Vietnamese run their own affairs once the emergency is over. U.S. actions would speak louder than words in countering Communist propaganda.

b. *Prisoners.* The handling of Communist prisoners needs improvement. The present system has dangerous aspects which weaken the psychological effort among the people and against the enemy. Use of Puolo Condore, with its connotation of the worst of French colonialism, is an example. The decision role of the province chiefs is another example. After the rehabilitation period, of 6–12 months, the province chief is asked if there are any other charges against the prisoner, or can he be released? All too often, the province chief, hearing that there is secret Communist organization and training going on among the prisoners, simply replies that the prisoner is too dangerous to be returned home. The prisoner then settles down to a life where he doesn't have to work and where he is better fed than the soldiers. Secretary Thuan states that there are about 10,000 such Viet Cong prisoners held by the Vietnamese. The Philippines' experience with Huk prisoners and EDCOR rehabilitation indicates that much more can be done with Viet Cong prisoners.

c. *The Vietnamese Will to Resist.* Viet Cong terrorist methods have alienated the people deeply, although they are too scared to show it unless given at least the hope of security. So far, they haven't been given such a hope by the Vietnamese government and armed forces, except spottily. Too many villagers are treated with equal suspicion by both sides in this struggle; the Communists cut off heads, while the Army keeps people for days of interrogation away from supporting their families, once information is given about Viet Cong activity. Improved relations with the people, (such as a return to the "ten commandments" formerly obeyed by the Vietnamese armed forces),

and improved military patrolling backed by more responsive government work, should release the expression of popular will: It would be actively anti-Communist.

Indicators of this popular will are many. The people of Phan Thiet fed the marines five meals a day, voluntarily, during recent operations when the marines undertook aggressive patrolling, and offered to support them if they would stay. Catholic priests from three different areas of the south became excitedly enthusiastic when I asked them if there were youths in their villages who would volunteer to fight the Communists; in their enthusiasm, they promised to raise 20,000 volunteers quickly, if they could become "fighters" and not "soldiers." Americans working in the High Plateau assured me that many of the Montagnards are desperately angry at the Viet Cong and are ready to help in the fight if treated as men and not as sub-human; President Diem noted a similar feeling of Montagnard hatred of the Viet Cong from recent talks he has had with French missionaries, (although he wants to regroup the Montagnards into large settlements in the Malaya pattern).

The Viet Cong have broken the rules laid down by Mao Tse Tung for success. This mistake needs to be exploited hard.

d. *Secretary Thuan.* If the U.S. is to go into a fuller effort for victory in Vietnam, one of the key people we will have to bet a blue chip on is Secretary Thuan. As his stature and executive control have grown, so have grown the suspicions that he is self-serving. Some of the top officers in the armed forces, along with other government officials, view him with distinct antipathy. Several are quite active in "character assassination" of Thuan. Perhaps having an American collaborator working closely with Thuan will tend to quiet the talk about him.

Thuan always has been the man "to get things done." He has risen to his present position largely on his own merit as an executive, with some help from Nhu and against considerable opposition from Hue. His real ambition is not known to me. When I have questioned him about his future hopes, he has laughed and said that what he enjoys most is to travel and hopes to earn the right to have leisure for so doing. However, he has questioned me at times about Magsaysay, (who moved from Secretary of Defense to the Presidency); such questioning always has been on how Magsaysay acted as the civilian executive in military affairs, and not on how he achieved political ends.

Thuan is plainly over-burdened with tasks. His health, (he suffered a heart attack some months ago), has improved, but he is complaining of back trouble. President Diem has expressed concern about Thuan's back, explaining that he is suffering from "minor

fractures of the back-bone" and is under medical care. Continuing U.S. medical assistance for Thuan is indicated.

Some relief from his multiple duties also is indicated for Thuan. He is already acting to overcome this problem, by pushing for the creation of an Executive Council for National Security and by appointing more competent assistants. The latter action is complicated by the political connections of some less-competent assistants, but Thuan is moving decisively to weed them out and to appoint officials to whom he can entrust further responsibilities.

Thuan's continuing worry is about the competence of the military commanders. This is an area of concern where an American collaborator could do much constructive work, in clearing up misunderstandings and in working intimately with MAAG to strengthen the command structure into real effectiveness. When asked about military leadership, Thuan rattled off a fast comment about many individuals; the following are his personal views:

Colonel Nguyen Duc Thang—the coming military leader, he fights and also knows how to run things; a future chief of staff. Good background in science and math. Very dedicated man. Marches on foot when he leads his troops. A moral man who doesn't worship money or playing around.

General Ty—a figurehead.

General "Big" Minh—always complaining, and doesn't take action when he has the opportunity; his plans never seem to be complete; he does such things as send airborne troops into combat by truck when air envelopment would be more effective.

General "Little" Minh—intelligent, very smart, but hard to understand.

Joint General Staff—very good, as playboys.

General Don—an excellent staff officer who is misplaced in a combat command.

General Ding—zero, no good.

General Kim—good staff officer.

Neum, III Corps—gets his old division, has a few tricks, don't like him.

Colonel Khiem, CO 21st Division—good, but a little lazy; he is not truly a partisan of the offense, because he likes fortifications.

The three coming men are the Airborne Commander, the Marines Commander, and Colonel Thang.

e. *Chinese Nationalists.* There have been some private exchanges between President Diem and Generalissimo Chiang on the possible use of Chinese Special Forces type of personnel in Vietnam. The exchange of views apparently have given full consideration to the political hazards in undertaking such an action, so they have been treated sensitively and with some slowness. The present thinking is

for a group of about 200 veterans, ages 35–40, to come into Vietnam as Vietnamese, being "sheep-dipped" in Cholon and given Vietnamese names. They will train village Self Defense Corps in handling weapons, patrol actions, and intelligence reporting. The idea is under study at present, presumably requiring U.S. approval before being undertaken.

Some thought might be given to "human defoliation" in an area such as Zone D. The timber in this jungle contains valuable hardwoods. If the timber concession was let to Chinese Nationalists, say a commercial firm which was composed of veterans who volunteered for the task, the "fire-break" plan of sectoring Zone D might be carried out at minimal cost, with a politically-acceptable introduction of Chinese Nationalists, and with definite benefit to both the welfare and morale of Chinese veterans in Taiwan. A small Vietnamese unit could be attached to such an outfit, as "protection" to give proper commercial coloration to the venture. However, the ChiNats should be sufficiently armed for self-protection, which would include patrolling in the vicinity of the lumber operation. The Vietnamese unit could forward intelligence reports from this operation, as well as furnish coordination when larger Viet Cong units were met and the Vietnamese Armed Forces were needed for the strike at the enemy.

f. *Psychological Operations.* Despite good organizations and some dedicated Vietnamese and Americans in psychological operations, it seems that the Communists still have the psychological edge in the struggle in Vietnam. This is expressed in terms of deep belief in inevitable victory, which is catching and effective even among staunch anti-Communists. On the other hand, given a real U.S. stiffening in Vietnam, a hope of victory, and better yet, the hope of lifting the yoke of Communism from their brothers in North Vietnam, the Vietnamese would catch fire, as would many others in Asia and elsewhere in the world.

An immediate improvement can be made by closer U.S. collaboration with the Vietnamese to get some joint mutual themes and then to exploit them thoroughly, with U.S. help. This feeling was expressed informally in a meeting with the U.S. Psychological Sub-Committee of the Task Force, with general agreement of those present—all of whom would like to see more follow-through and better means of operating. Vietnamese government actions often need much more thorough planning and exploitation, which present joint efforts do not satisfy.

In day-to-day work, there is a continuing theme of Viet Cong excesses in behavior which can be exploited to damage Communist political claims. At the same time, there are many constructive actions by the Vietnamese which need much fuller exploitation,

including recognition of individuals and organizations. However, there are equipment and use needs which require expedited action.

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211. Memorandum for the Record[1]

Washington, November 6, 1961.

SUBJECT

Meeting to discuss the recommendations of the Taylor Mission to South Viet-Nam

PRESENT

General Taylor	Secretary McNamara
Under Secretary Alexis Johnson	Lt General Cabell
Under Secretary Ball	Mr Hamilton
Mr Rostow	Assistant Secretary Bundy
Mr Bissell	Mr Cottrell
General Lemnitzer	LCdr Bagley
Under Secretary Gilpatric	

1. General Taylor opened the meeting with a broad assessment of the situation in South Viet-Nam as he saw it during his trip. From the background thus set, he outlined his recommendations to alter the situation favorably. These remarks essentially included—and broadened—the content of messages to the President forwarded from SEA by General Taylor.

2. In answer to specific questions, General Taylor said:

a. The Provincial Survey proposed does not duplicate work done by the Staley Group.

b. Withdrawal of US forces on the basis of completion of a flood relief task would be a matter of months.

3. General Taylor, in reporting the initial reactions of the President[2] to his recommendations, stated:

a. The President had many questions. He is instinctively against introduction of US forces.

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-127-69. Top Secret. Prepared by Bagley; the date on the source text is apparently the drafting date rather than the date the conference took place. The subject matter, the participants, and the course of the discussion suggest that the conference took place November 4.

[2] Apparently a reference to Taylor's meeting with the President the previous day; see footnote 1, *supra*.

b. The President, at the high level meeting scheduled for 7 November, would like participants to address themselves to:

(1) Their opinion as to the quality of the proposed program.
(2) Implications and meaning of the program if implemented.
(3) How the program should be implemented.

c. The President hoped that Diem would broaden the representation in his government as an earnest to increased US assistance.

4. The comments of those present followed the lines as outlined below:

McNamara: The recommendations in themselves, including the "8000-man force" would not save South Viet-Nam from Communism. It is a US commitment to the ground and other forces would be made ready. It is not a temporary commitment; without the "8000-man force", the recommendations will not save South Viet-Nam; with it, they might.

Small actions without words are not necessarily useful. There should be a commitment with the introduction of a US force; we need a clear objective to plan properly. Tell the world and the US what our commitment really is; the "8000-man force" does not convince anyone of our resolve. In Laos, our objective was never understood. The objective should be in a broad context—secure independence of South Viet-Nam—and resources should be applied against North Viet-Nam.

On Tuesday, the agenda should be restricted to:

a. What is US objective in South Viet-Nam?
b. How far do we want to go?
c. How far do we want to state it publicly?

The forces—6 to 8 divisions—required to meet Communist escalation in SEA are available. Put this factor aside and discuss decision on basis of value of area to the US.

Johnson: The Delta is not the place to put US forces; the Plateau is better. Can we save South Viet-Nam with steps short of putting in US forces?

Ball: The placing of the "8000-man force" in South Viet-Nam commits us to unlimited action. Why wait on going at Hanoi? Maybe USSR will be glad to see us engaged in SEA. It is difficult to tell US people we are undertaking a limited series of actions; easier to say we are making a full commitment. If we make such a full commitment—and it is necessary to make the "8000-man force" creditable—we should move fast. A larger force is preferable.[3]

Rostow: Question really is whether we will accept a guerrilla war supported externally as a legal international process. We should take the limited actions recommended by General Taylor, surface the Jorden paper with necessary follow-up, then look to Hanoi. The Vice President's trip and the Taylor Mission lay on the need for

[3] For his recollection of the discussion at this meeting, see Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*, p. 366.

action. There is no soft option. Hanoi and Peking have basic weaknesses which lessen the risk to US action.

Lemnitzer: Employment of "8000-man force" will result in combat forces being thinned out in an area in which it is hard to operate. We must commit the number of troops required for success.

Bissell: Taylor recommendations are useful for they represent action, not talk. Laos is an opposite example.

5. In response, General Taylor stated his recommendations were made in response to the Presidential directive to bolster the GVN to win their own war. The proposals should be tried, the US position kept flexible, and the GVN watched for proper follow-up.

WHB [4]

[4] Printed from a copy that bears these typed initials.

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212. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, November 4, 1961—6:50 p.m.

545. For Ambassador. Ref: EmbAir A–50, Aug. 17; Embtels 414, Sept. 28; 545, Oct. 25; 549, Oct. 27; 558, Oct. 28. [2] There will be highest level discussion here November 7 on Viet Nam. Effectiveness Diem government will be closely examined. Highest levels request your views prior to meeting on extent to which you believe Diem can be induced to modify and broaden his government if US decides to make substantial additional contribution along lines you discussed with General Taylor.

Feeling is strong that major changes will be required if joint effort is to be successful in that US cannot be asked further engage its prestige and forces while machinery of Diem government remains inadequate and thus full capabilities South Vietnamese forces and population not being realized.

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/10–461. Secret; Priority; Limit Distribution. Drafted by Wood, cleared with McConaughy and S/S, initialed by Johnson (G) for the Acting Secretary, and repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Airgram A–50 is not printed. Telegram 414, a detailed status report on the political aspects of the counterinsurgency plan, is not printed. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5–MSP/9–2861) Telegram 549 is not printed. For telegrams 545 and 558, see Documents 193 and 199.

For example, delegation of authority to Vietnamese civil and military authorities commensurate with their responsibilities to overcome present GVN paralysis and sense nonparticipation seems mandatory.

Would appreciate your comments on following possible changes:

1. Creation of National Emergency Council (pursuant to Diem's declaration National emergency) headed by a person of importance and capability (if possible Vice President Tho) through which all GVN business to and from Diem would be transacted. Nhu would coordinate between Diem and NEC. Thuan would be Secretary of NEC. A mature, discreet and hard headed US member would be appointed to participate in all decisions and coordinate with Ambassador. Membership primarily civilian, presumably members present Cabinet.

2. On military side there would be comparable delegation of authority commensurate with responsibility to be achieved placing all services under Joint General Staff and by intelligence unification.

If these basic and difficult changes could be achieved, might then be possible make progress on following:

a) simplify GVN structure and programs.

b) greater role for VP Tho as capable man and constitutional successor.

c) improved contacts between GVN and Vietnamese people, including Sects and labor unions.

d) Other reforms agreed to in CIP but not carried out (refAir).

In addition to foregoing, would appreciate your full comments and suggestions with respect this entire problem.

Bowles

213. Memorandum From the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson) to the Secretary of State [1]

Washington, November 5, 1961.

SUBJECT

General Taylor's Recommendations

Attached is a copy of General Taylor's recommendations. [2] (This is the only copy in the Department. At the President's direction, they have been held very closely and thus far have been seen only by Mr. Ball, Mr. McConaughy and myself.) The eight specific recommendations begin on page 3. In summary, they are:

(1) Insertion of some U.S. individual administrators into the GVN.

(2) A joint effort to improve the military-political intelligence system beginning at the provincial level.

(3) A joint survey by individual provinces of the social, political, intelligence and military factors.

(4) A joint effort to free the GVN Army for mobile offensive operations by improving the training and equipping of the civil guard and self-defense corps and increasing the helicopter, light aviation and reconnaissance capabilities with U.S. military units to the extent necessary. Also, establishment of a "border ranger force" for use on the Laotian border.

(5) Furnishing U.S. advisers, operating personnel and small craft for control of coastal waters and inland waterways.

(6) Increasing size of MAAG (up to about 2,400) with more clearly defined mission of active direction and indirect control of GVN forces.

(7) Introducing into South Viet-Nam a "military task force" to provide:

(a) U.S. military presence to raise national morale and show seriousness of U.S. intent;

(b) Conduct logistical operations in support of military and flood relief operations;

(c) Conduct combat operations as are necessary for self-defense and security of area in which such forces stationed;

(d) Provide an emergency reserve to back up the GVN forces; and

(e) Act as an advance party if CINCPAC or SEATO contingency plans are invoked.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11–561. Top Secret. Drafted and initialed by Johnson and sent through S/S. Rusk returned to Washington on November 5 from his trip to Japan.

[2] Not found as an attachment to the source text, but presumably a reference to the first of the two attachments to Document 210.

(8) Review U.S. economic aid program to take into account flood relief needs and give priority to those projects supporting the counter-insurgency program.

General Taylor and some members of his party met privately with the President on their return Friday afternoon.[3] Saturday morning George Ball and I, with Fowler Hamilton for a part of the time, met with General Taylor, Walt Rostow and Cottrell, with McNamara, Gilpatric, Lemnitzer, Cabell and Dick Bissell also present.[4]

The essence of the discussion revolved around whether the United States should make a "Berlin-type commitment" to South Viet-Nam, and it was agreed that discussion with the President should focus on this basic question. McNamara took the position that, if this decision were made, Defense could cope "with the problem of forces". It was also agreed that, if this decision were made, the question of whether, when and how to introduce American forces would much more easily fall into place. There was little enthusiasm for the concept that, by introducing American forces for flood relief purposes, we would thereby retain greater flexibility and be able more readily to withdraw our forces if we decided to go no further. There was also concern over introducing and involving our forces in the delta area, where conditions are most difficult for the effective combat deployment of American forces.

At the President's request we are doing up a paper on what reforms we can and should expect from Diem, and have sent a telegram to Nolting on this.[5]

A meeting with the President is tentatively scheduled for 5 p.m. Tuesday.[6]

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[3] See footnote 1, *ibid.*

[4] Apparently a reference to the meeting described in Document 211.

[5] *Supra.*

[6] November 7.

214. Draft Memorandum From the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) to the President [1]

Washington, November 5, 1961.

The basic issue framed by the Taylor Report is whether the US shall:

a. Commit itself to the clear objective of preventing the fall of South Vietnam to Communism, and thus holding the non-Communist areas of Southeast Asia.

b. Support this commitment by necessary immediate military actions and preparations for possible later actions.

My judgment is as follows: [2]

1. The fall of South Vietnam to Communism would lead to the fairly rapid extension of Communist control, or complete accommodation to Communism, in the rest of mainland Southeast Asia right down to Indonesia. The strategic implications worldwide would be extremely serious.

2. The chances are against, probably sharply against, preventing that fall by any measures short of the introduction of US forces on a substantial scale. I [3] accept General Taylor's judgment that the various measures proposed by him short of this (what we came to call "the seven points") [4] are useful but will not in themselves do the job of restoring confidence and setting Diem on the way to winning his fight.

3. The introduction of a US force of the magnitude of an initial 8–10,000 men—whether in a flood relief context or otherwise— [5]

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[1] Source: Department of State, Bundy Files, 1961 Chron. Top Secret. Drafted by William P. Bundy on November 5 and attached to Bundy's memorandum of that date to McNamara, in which he asked whether the draft "at least raises the basic points you wanted" and noted that "one possible omission is the issue of nuclear weapons as part of a punitive action." On the source text are McNamara's handwritten revisions and interpolations, apparently done on November 6 since he wrote November "6" over the "5". McNamara's changes are described in footnotes below.

Bundy recalled that following the Saturday morning meeting described in Document 211, McNamara asked him to draft a memorandum directed toward the question McNamara raised at the meeting, namely whether the United States should make a clear "Berlin-type" commitment to Vietnam. Bundy said that the draft memorandum, which he finished on Sunday, November 5, was sent to the President only after "extensive discussions" with the Joint Chiefs and other Defense Department officials and with "important revisions in the last part." (Unpublished Bundy memoirs, Chapter IV, pp. 24-25) For text of the memorandum, see Document 227.

[2] McNamara crossed out this sentence and wrote above it, "The JCS, Mr. G[ilpatric], and I have reached the following conclusions:"

[3] McNamara replaced the word "I" with "We".

[4] McNamara deleted the entire parenthetical phrase.

[5] McNamara changed the first part of this sentence to read, "The introduction of a US force of the magnitude of an initial 8,000 men in a flood relief context".

will be of great help to Diem. However, it will not convince the other side (whether the shots are called from Moscow, Peiping, or Hanoi) that we mean business.[6] The response would be an intensified effort that would probably outrun the successive increments of our own effort as it developed. We would thus be almost certain to get increasingly mired down in an inconclusive struggle.

4. The other side can be convinced we mean business only if we accompany the initial force introduction by a clear commitment to the full objective stated above, accompanied by a warning through some channel to Hanoi that continued support of the Viet Cong will lead to punitive retaliation against North Vietnam.

5. If we act in this way, we must proceed at once to increase our military forces available to CINCPAC by about (2) divisions over the next (4) months. The initial force may succeed in turning the situation around; Hanoi, possibly under pressure from Moscow, may decide to cut down its support so that the situation will gradually come under control. However, the chances of this are probably not more than 50–50, and certainly not so good that we can fail to prepare for follow-up action. Above all, we must decide now that we will in fact take that action as and when it is needed.[7]

6. The ultimate possible extent of our military commitment must be faced.[8] The struggle may be prolonged and Hanoi and Peiping may intervene overtly. In view of the logistic difficulties faced by the other side, I believe we can assume that the maximum US forces required on the ground will not exceed (6–8) divisions, or about (220,000) men, and that our military posture is, or can be made, adequate to furnish these forces. For the immediate purpose of raising the needed (2) additional divisions we (will/will not) need additional legal authority from the Congress. However, we can do the job without serious interference with our present Berlin plans.[9]

7. I return to my central view, that clarity of objective is crucial.[10] To accept the stated objective is of course a most serious decision. Military force is not the only element of what must be a most carefully coordinated set of actions. Success will depend on

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[6] McNamara inserted the following sentence at this point. "Moreover, it probably will not tip the scales decisively."

[7] McNamara deleted all of paragraph 5 and accordingly renumbered the subsequent paragraphs.

[8] McNamara revised the first sentence to read, "5. If we act in this way, the ultimate possible extent of our military commitment must be faced."

[9] McNamara revised the last three sentences as follows: "In view of the logistic difficulties faced by the other side, we believe we can assume that the maximum US forces required on the ground in SEA will not exceed (6–8) divisions, or about (220,000) men. Our military posture is, or, with the addition of more N[ational] G[uard] divisions, can be made, adequate to furnish these forces without serious interference with our present Berlin plans."

[10] McNamara deleted the entire first sentence and renumbered the paragraph "6."

factors many of which are not within our control—notably the conduct of Diem himself and other leaders in the area. Laos will remain a major problem. The domestic political implications of accepting the objective are also grave, although it is my own feeling that the country will respond better to a firm initial position than to courses of action that lead us in only gradually, and that in the meantime are sure to involve casualties. The over-all effect on Moscow and Peiping will need careful weighing and may well be mixed; however, permitting South Vietnam to fall can only strengthen and encourage them greatly.

8. In sum, I [11] recommend an affirmative decision on the issue stated at the start of this memorandum.

Robert S. McNamara

[11] McNamara renumbered the paragraph "7." and replaced "I" with "we".

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215. Editorial Note

On November 5, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and a party including his daughter Indira Gandhi and Foreign Secretary M.J. Desai arrived in the United States for a 10-day visit. Briefing papers for the visit, including an undated position paper on Vietnam, NIN D–14, prepared by the Department of State, are in Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 65 D 366, CF 1990. Also in this folder is a memorandum from Acting Secretary of State Chester Bowles to the President, November 3, offering suggestions on the talks with Nehru. The Acting Secretary made the following comments regarding Southeast Asia, which he said was possibly "the most important single question" the President would discuss with Nehru:

"You might consider broadening the discussion by pointing out the grave decision you personally might be called upon to make in the coming months with the weakening situation in Vietnam, the great uncertainties in Laos, and potential instability in Thailand.

"Naturally, you hesitate to think of committing major troops to this area, and you would give everything in the world to avoid it if possible in this era of nuclear weapons when a local war can quickly spread and intensify.

"Yet if the Chinese should move into this region, the whole of Southeast Asia would be opened up from Australia to the east and India to the west, and this would be hard for us to accept.

"Can the Prime Minister think of any way to achieve a new power balance in the area that would relieve us of our present direct confrontation with the Communists which we did not seek and do not want?

"With that opening, it is *conceivable* that the possibility of a neutral and independent Southeast Asia, guaranteed by India together with the Soviet Union and the United States, and for the record, at least, by China, might emerge naturally out of the discussion.

"If not, it might be worthwhile to consider opening this subject yourself. In my opinion, a settlement in Laos is very nearly meaningless unless we can find some way to create stability in Vietnam. If the latter situation deteriorates much further, Thailand is almost certain at some point to make her own adjustments with Peking, and this could turn our present position into a shambles and present us with an ugly and dangerous choice."

After appearing on NBC's "Meet the Press" in New York on the evening of November 5, Nehru, along with some members of his party, went the following day to Hammersmith Farm, Newport, Rhode Island, the home of Jacqueline Kennedy's mother and stepfather. Already at the farm were the President, members of his family, and the Ambassador to India, John Kenneth Galbraith. In his journal, Galbraith described the luncheon discussion that day as follows:

"At the residence, we had a long lunch, mostly on South Vietnam. The President and I pressed Nehru hard on what we should do to put down Communist terror. Could Ho Chi Minh do anything? The U.N.? What about a U.N. observer corps? What could the I.C.C. do? Nehru was rather negative on all of these matters and most interested in making clear that we should not send in soldiers. I agree heartily but we need an alternative with a plausible chance of success." (Galbraith, *Ambassador's Journal*, page 246)

On the evening of November 6, the Nehru party and the President flew to Andrews Air Force Base in Washington, where they were greeted by Vice President Johnson, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, other United States officials and members of the diplomatic corps. From the airport, Galbraith rode to the Department of State with Rusk to whom he described the luncheon discussion that day together with his own arguments against the introduction of United States troops into Vietnam. (*Ibid.*, page 247)

216. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, November 6, 1961—7 p.m.

598. Eyes only for the Secretary. Reurtel 388 October 5 and my reply 445 October 6. [2] A great deal has occurred here in interval of one month since exchange reftels. In first place, security situation has markedly deteriorated in terms of increased incidents and lack of noteworthy government victories and, above all, in effects of these retrograde developments on public and official morale. In this situation, special mission of General Taylor has tended bring situation here to a head more rapidly than anticipated. Government and people of Viet-Nam, and especially military forces, now expect major underwriting by US. Public expectation has developed, on basis largely of hope, to such extent that failure on part US to make major new commitments here would, I fear, cause rapid deterioration present unsatisfactory situation and collapse of morale.

I heartily endorse the six recommendations which General Taylor sent from here (Embtels 536 and 544 [3]). Nevertheless, I am sure that neither he nor you will be under any illusions as to formidable obstacles to implementing some of them. You will note that several of the six points are procedural, involving better utilization existing GVN resources and development better techniques, with our help. These recommendations hit the principal spots where improvements should and can be made, but I caution against assumption that miracles can be worked here in field of GVN organization for two reasons: severe shortage of capable, trained, cooperative-minded people with a will to national unity, and the personality of President Diem. Nevertheless, we have made some, and can make further improvements in GVN organization, and under the pressure of present emergency Diem speaks as if he is willing to allow us to become more intimately involved in GVN plans and their execution. We should certainly make best use this opportunity.

Main new substantive US contributions recommended in Taylor's six points are: (1) three helicopter squadrons (63 helicopters) to give much-needed mobility to GVN forces especially in vicinity of Laotian border, and (2) US military task force to do job of rehabilitation flooded provinces of Mekong Delta. With respect to (1), it is clear that if these helicopters are to be useful in time, American pilots and maintenance crews are required.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-661. Top Secret; Niact.
[2] See Document 147 and footnote 2 thereto.
[3] Telegram 536 is printed as Document 190. Telegram 544 is not printed.

As valuable and necessary as I consider these two additional US contributions to be, and without them I think there is likely to be a collapse of morale and/or a military coup d'état here, I am not sure that these commitments, coupled with other actions undertaken and planned, will be sufficient for the long run. I would expect the Communists to react by increasing the tempo and strength of their campaign within SVN, by heavier infiltrations into central Viet-Nam and perhaps also in the delta, thus attempting to discredit US military presence here. In final analysis, in order to win we may have to force Communist side to conclude that further attempt to take this country by introduction of force from outside will be met direct US action against North Viet-Nam. I think the steps recommended by General Taylor are necessary now, but I wanted you to have my private and personal assessment as you consider them.

Nolting

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217. Notes by the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) [1]

Washington, November 6, 1961.

Views of Chiefs—11/6/61

1. 8000 should be considered part of a larger increment to come later if that proves necessary.

2. The 8000 men will probably not be sufficient to preserve independence of SVN.

3. Action in SVN should be considered part of action SE Asia.

4. Further mil. aid to SVN should be accompanied by agreement with Diem of action he will take.

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Files: FRC 71 A 3470, SE Asia 1961. Handwritten by McNamara. The source text does not indicate whether the views of the Joint Chiefs were communicated orally or in writing, but they may have been given to McNamara by Lemnitzer at a luncheon meeting which, according to Lemnitzer's journal, took place in the Secretary of Defense's dining room at 1 p.m. on November 6. (National Defense University, Lemnitzer Papers, L-419-71)

Prior to the meeting between McNamara and the Joint Chiefs, the following telephone conversation took place between McNamara and Rusk at 10:53 a.m.:

"M said he understands tomorrow at 5 they are to meet with the Pres on the Taylor report. The Sec said he is seeing T at 2:45 today. M wants a meeting between the two appoints with the Sec and Lemnitzer. They have doubts about the approach recommended and he hopes to thrash this out with the JCS today. The Sec said he would stop by there about 6." (Department of State, Rusk Files: Lot 72 D 192, Telephone Calls)

5. Further US mil. aid to SE Asia will not lead to use of nuclear weapons by USSR.

6. Further US aid to SVN should be accompanied by notice to NVN that action will be taken against it unless stop support of Viet Cong.

7. If further US aid is not provided to SVN it will fall & following it: SE Asia.

8. It is not necessary now to call tact . . . additional res. or gd. force . . . . [2]

[2] The last sentence is illegible. The ellipses are the editor's.

218. Memorandum of a Conversation, The White House, Washington, November 7, 1961, 10–10:32 a.m.[1]

PARTICIPANTS

The President
Secretary of State
Ambassador J.K. Galbraith, U.S. Ambassador to India
Mr. Walt Rostow, Special Assistant to the President
Assistant Secretary of State Phillips Talbot
Prime Minister Nehru
Foreign Secretary Desai
Ambassador B.K. Nehru, Indian Ambassador to U.S.

[Here follows discussion of the Berlin situation and Soviet foreign policy.]

Turning to another subject, the President acknowledged the importance India places in its geographic situation in relation to its foreign policy. He also recalled that the United States had been neutralist for a long time. Nevertheless he wanted to say that we would like India to oppose us on issues when we were wrong and to support us on those occasions when we might be right. The Prime Minister welcomed the opportunity afforded by this comment to explain the Indian approach to international issues. Indians naturally seek to act on the merit of each matter, the Prime Minister said, but

[1] Source: Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 65 D 366, CF 1990. Secret. Drafted by Talbot and approved in the Office of the Secretary on November 26 and in the White House on December 4. (Kennedy Library, JFK Appointment Books) For Galbraith's account of the conversation, see *Ambassador's Journal*, p. 248.

he attaches importance to the manner of approach as well. He wants to create the feeling that India wants to be friendly and wants to cooperate with other nations even though it does not necessarily agree with each of them on a particular point. It is not a question of finding a midway position between the United States and the Soviet Union; that would have no meaning, really. The worst of the cold war is that it makes everyone rigid in mind and in spirit and so it becomes difficult for either side to deal with the other side. If the way to war is obstructed, then a feeling will come that matters can be dealt with in other ways, and the approach becomes easier.

The President described the foreign policy of the United States as, of course, to support countries with democratic systems, but even more basically to support national sovereignty. Sometimes this means, unhappily, that we support governments not fully supported by their own people. Yet it is not always easy to withdraw. In some places we believe that if we should withdraw communism might take over by subversion. This is the problem that faces us; we don't object when communists take over by electoral means as Jagan did in British Guinea.

The Prime Minister asked why communism has an appeal to many people. Mainly, he felt, it develops in poor and underdeveloped countries. The President pointed out that in many areas communism takes over by force and subversion. The Prime Minister agreed that no one would view with approval terroristic tactics, adding, however, that military actions bring unfortunate results. The very act of meeting a situation militarily may make it worse. For example, with the help of United States forces a situation may be cleared but it is very likely that the position of the leaders then becomes weaker because of their dependence on an outside power. Thus the problem is not settled.

President Kennedy explained that we are faced with a situation in which we are making efforts to settle the Laos problem but at the same time there are serious attacks on South Vietnam, some of them via Laos. If these should succeed, it would look as if by our willingness to negotiate on Laos we had lost both Laos and Vietnam. That would discredit our efforts and make it impossible for us to negotiate on other issues, including Berlin.

Ambassador Galbraith interjected that several members of this Administration have had the view that truly neutral countries offer opportunities for us to help economically to build them up. If in Laos or in any other country neutralism becomes merely a stage which precedes a communist takeover then the whole concept of neutralism will become a stench in the nostrils. The question is what India and other countries can do about this.

Agreeing that there is a question of what to do, Prime Minister Nehru observed that the whole idea in the Geneva Conference of 1954 was to create international commissions to meet this situation. To some extent it has been the failure to live up to these commitments that has led to later difficulties. If the commissions had not been there he was convinced that trouble would have come much sooner in Vietnam. In Laos, indeed, trouble did come after the commission was closed down. These things don't always happen according to plans or our decision. We can affect them sometimes but not always. The Prime Minister said he realized the position of the United States is difficult because the United States is tied up in many matters from which it is difficult to come out.

On Laos the President said that the United States will try to persuade the three Princes to come together promptly, in this month of November. But, he added, we don't want our efforts in Laos to end in a collapse in South Vietnam.

[Here follows discussion of nuclear testing, the Kashmir question, Indo-Pakistani relations, Ghana, and Yugoslavia.]

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219. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, November 7, 1961—1 a.m.

608. Reference: Deptels 545 and 550.[2] I think Diem can be induced to modify his govt, but not to extent set forth paras 1 and 2 reftels, which would in his view amount to divesting himself of key instruments of power.

I believe Diem can be persuaded to create and use a National Emergency Council (or some similar executive organ), but probably only if chaired by his brother Nhu. Vice President Tho would in all probability be a member of this council and Thuan would probably be its Secretary. I do not think Diem could be persuaded to place a US member on the Council "to participate in all decisions". This

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-761. Secret; Niact; Limit Distribution; Eyes Only. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd. Received in the Department of State at 3:30 p.m.

[2] Telegram 545 is printed as Document 212. In telegram 550 to Saigon, November 6, the Department asked the Embassy to comment, with regard to paragraph 2 D of telegram 545, on the possibility of the introduction of "new local faces" into the Government of Vietnam. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-661)

step would, I think, be interpreted by him and by most Vietnamese as handing over Govt of SVN to US.

On military side, I do not believe Diem can be persuaded to delegate complete authority to anyone, but I do think he can be induced to take a less direct part in military operational matters. Re intelligence unification, I think this can be achieved, and we are on way towards it as reported Embtel 558.[3]

Re para 2 A, B, C, D and Deptel 550, believe we can make progress in these areas if President Diem accepts the type National Emergency Council indicated above.

In my judgment, our best bet is to continue to press for improvements in GVN governmental efficiency and popular appeal by backing Pres Diem, using the confidence we have gained to persuade him in the directions we want, utilizing his own Vietnamese advisors to this end, but never giving him grounds to believe that we are trying to undercut his constitutional position or to reduce his overall prestige and authority.

My views as to broad limits of what we can and cannot accomplish on that basis are set out in my telegram to Secretary of Nov 6 (Embtel 598[4]).

Nolting

[3] Document 199
[4] Document 216

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220. Editorial Note

Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs George W. Ball met with President Kennedy on November 7 to discuss a subject not related to Vietnam. At the end of that meeting, according to Ball, they discussed Vietnam:

"I told him that I strongly opposed the recommendations of the Rostow mission. To commit American forces to South Vietnam would, in my view, be a tragic error. Once that process started, I said, there would be no end to it. 'Within five years we'll have three hundred thousand men in the paddies and jungles and never find them again. That was the French experience. Vietnam is the worst possible terrain both from a physical and political point of view.' To my surprise, the President seemed quite unwilling to discuss the matter, responding with an overtone of asperity: 'George, you're just

crazier than hell. That just isn't going to happen.' . . . " (Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*, pages 366–367)

No other record of this conversation between Ball and the President has been found. Ball's only meeting with the President on November 7 apparently was with Clarence Randall, 4–4:23 p.m., off the record. (Kennedy Library, Kennedy Log Book)

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221. Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, Washington, November 7, 1961, 5:13 p.m. [1]

SUBJECT

Viet Nam

PARTICIPANTS

Mr. M.J. Desai, Foreign Secretary, Government of India
The Secretary
U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs
Phillips Talbot, Assistant Secretary, Near East and South Asia
Rogers B. Morgan, Officer-in-Charge, India–Ceylon–Nepal

The Secretary asked Mr. Desai for his thoughts on how it might be possible to reverse the trend in Viet Nam from its present slippery downward slope. Mr. Desai said, after some thought, the basic thing was to have in South Viet Nam a regime—the present one or another—that would be non-Communist, though not necessarily anti-Communist; the regime should be interested in economic development; and it should be willing to agree to a continued separation of North and South Viet Nam. At present each regime in Viet Nam is threatening to absorb the other.

Mr. Desai professed to be too out of touch with South Viet Nam, which he had left in 1955, [2] to have any thoughts on any possible alternative to Diem. He characterized Diem as sincere, courageous, self-centered, stubborn. He told a number of anecdotes of his own contacts with Diem, not just from his position on the ICC, but as a disinterested advisor to Diem. These stories illustrated

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[1] Source: Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 65 D 366, CF 1990. Confidential. Drafted by Morgan, approved in the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs on [illegible] 17, and in the Office of the Secretary on November 26. The time of the meeting is taken from Rusk's Appointment Book. (Johnson Library, Rusk Appointment Books)

[2] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

Mr. Desai's failure to convince Diem that he should subordinate everything to Diem's big problem, which was and is the enmity of the North Viet Nam regime. For example, he had tried to persuade Diem to make his peace with Prince Sihanouk but Diem told him he could not deal with such a madman. Mr. Desai expressed his belief that Diem must be persuaded to broaden the base of his government and evoke the assistance of other South Vietnamese rather than merely to run the government for the benefit of his own family.

Mr. Desai said he felt it was important for us to take into account the objectives of the North Vietnamese in considering steps we might take in Viet Nam. He gave his analysis of North Vietnamese objectives, starting in 1954. He said at that time Hanoi was willing that Laos and Cambodia be neutral because Hanoi believed it would get South Viet Nam through political means, especially by exploiting differences between ourselves and the French and British.

During the period 1955 to 1958, Hanoi toyed with the Laotian situation and used Laos as a bargaining point with regard to a settlement of its relations with South Viet Nam. In 1958 he believed that Hanoi was somewhat worried about Laos but nevertheless allowed a settlement between Souvanna and the Pathet Lao. More recently our activities and the succession of governments in Laos caused Hanoi to intervene actively again.

Mr. Desai then moved to a consideration of the effect of various moves that could be made with regard to the Vietnamese situation. If a conference were to be held, the immediate result would be a call for elections. He said he had advised Ambassador Harriman against the United States using the conference approach to a settlement of the Viet Nam situation. If a small number of U.S. troops were to be moved in, he did not believe they would materially help the South Vietnamese. If a large number of troops were to move in, it would upset the Laotian situation and fighting would be renewed. Even if the U.S. ended up in military occupation of South Viet Nam and Laos, where would we be?

Mr. Johnson stressed the point that the fighting in South Viet Nam was very severe and very dirty, and that some immediate action appeared to us to be called for. Mr. Desai dismissed the dirtiness of the fighting as an old Vietnamese custom. He stressed that there was no immediate solution available in Viet Nam, and that the problem was to work on Diem and gradually to convince him of the necessity of changing his methods.

Mr. Desai also was asked for his suggestions for immediate action. He said first to get the Laotian settlement out of the way.

Second, we should get Diem to cooperate with the ICC and to expose through the ICC to the world what was happening. He said that he had received the Government of Viet Nam letter of October

24 [3] from Ambassador Harriman in Geneva and that it was the first really well-documented case South Viet Nam had made. He said that when he had learned in Delhi last month of the protest from South Viet Nam on Col. Nam's assassination, he had told the Indian ICC representative to ask for facts and that the ICC now had something to work with. He said that with ICC exposure it would be possible for the U.K. to press the U.S.S.R. to stop what was going on.

Third, he suggested that there should be no settlement of the reunification question while the war was going on. Mr. Johnson asked him whether he thought the Viet Minh would listen to the Soviet Union. Mr. Desai replied indirectly by saying that the Vietnamese hate the Chinese and always have. He predicted Hanoi would be Peiping's Yugoslavia in ten years. He suggested that it would be useful for Diem to announce publicly three policies: (1) cooperation with the ICC, (2) his determination to work for the economic development of the country in peace and freedom, and (3) his renunciation of force for the unification of the country. In short, Mr. Desai said he should carry the political offensive to the enemy's camp.

At the close of the conversation, Mr. Desai made the suggestion that South Viet Nam try to get economic help from its fellow Asians in the Colombo Plan.

[3] Not printed. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11–861)

222. Draft Memorandum From the Secretary of State to the President [1]

Washington, November 7, 1961.

SUBJECT

South Viet-Nam

The Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff agree:

1. The fall of South Viet-Nam to Communism would lead to the fairly rapid extension of Communist control, or complete accom-

[1] Source: Department of State, S/S Files: Lot 66 D 150, Taylor Report on VN. Top Secret. Drafted by U. Alexis Johnson. The similarity between certain sections of the source text and Document 214 suggests that Johnson consulted with William Bundy in the preparation of this draft.

modation to Communism, in the rest of mainland Southeast Asia and in Indonesia. The strategic implications worldwide, particularly in the Orient, would be extremely serious.

2. The chances are against, probably sharply against, preventing the fall of South Viet-Nam by any measures short of the introduction of U.S. forces on a substantial scale.

If we commit combat forces to South Viet-Nam, the ultimate possible extent of our military commitment in Southeast Asia must be faced. The struggle may be prolonged, and Hanoi and Peiping may overtly intervene. It is the view of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff that, in the light of the logistic difficulties faced by the other side, we can assume that the maximum United States forces required on the ground in Southeast Asia would not exceed six divisions, or about 205,000 men. It is also the view of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff that our military posture is, or, with the addition of more National Guard or regular Army divisions, can be made, adequate to furnish these forces without serious interference with our present Berlin plans.

While it is clear that, from the standpoint of South Viet-Nam alone, the introduction of American combat forces into that country is most desirable, it is not clear what effect this action might have on Laos if this action is taken prior to a settlement with respect to that country. It could have the effect of causing the Communists to break off negotiations and renew their offensive in that country, thus requiring us also to commit forces in Laos or to abandon that country to full Communist control. While a fully satisfactory settlement with respect to Laos does not now appear probable, it may be possible in the near future to reach a settlement on the basis of a very weak and unsatisfactory Souvanna Phouma government.

Our only hope of achieving some stabilization of the situation in South Viet-Nam without the commitment of major United States combat forces may lie in:

1. Our prompt revamping of the administrative and military command structure of the GVN;
2. Sharply increased U.S. military assistance to the GVN in air lift, intelligence, water craft, and increased MAAG participation in the direction and control of GVN military operations; and
3. A sharp diminution in Communist support to the Viet Cong.

It might perhaps be possible to achieve point 3 above if we were able to communicate to the Communist bloc our firm and clear intention to intervene with United States combat forces in South Viet-Nam unless they took prompt steps to halt their support of the Viet Cong. However, this intention could not be communicated with conviction unless we ourselves had first taken a clear decision to commit ourselves to the objective of preventing the fall of South

Viet-Nam to Communism and the willingness to commit whatever United States combat forces may be required to accomplish this objective.

In the light of the foregoing, it is recommended:

1. We now take the decision to commit ourselves to the objective of preventing the fall of South Viet-Nam to Communism and the willingness to commit whatever United States combat forces may be necessary to achieve this objective.
2. We communicate this decision by suitable diplomatic means to the Communist bloc and selected friendly countries.
3. We continue our efforts to obtain a settlement in Laos.
4. We immediately undertake the first seven points of General Taylor's recommendations, deferring the decision on the timing of the introduction of combat forces into South Viet-Nam.

Dean Rusk [2]

[2] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

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223. Note From the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Bundy) to the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) [1]

Washington, November 7, 1961.

At the risk of blitzing you with paper, I attach some think-pieces on the Vietnam problem, by myself and Harry Rowen's staff. [2] The key paper, however, is the first one on possible outcomes. It is a first cut. Paul Nitze agrees with it.

Yesterday's discussion [3] did not bite deep on Laos. My own strong feeling is that we must let that one come to us—i.e., wait and see what the 8000 produces as reaction, but be ready to move fast on the off chance that Hanoi decides to take over before we can react. We cannot politically move into Laos right away, and we should try not to let our intervention in South Vietnam kill the

[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Files: FRC 71 A 3470, SE Asia 1961. Secret.

[2] The second attachment, "Effects Upon Laos of U.S. Actions to Defend South Viet Nam," is not printed.

[3] Perhaps a reference to the meeting between McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff described in Document 217.

chances of the Souvanna "solution" in Laos. In other words, one at a time.

WP Bundy

[Attachment 1]

Draft Paper Prepared by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Bundy) [1]

Washington, November 7, 1961.

Reflections on the Possible Outcomes of US Intervention in South Vietnam

The range of possible outcomes:

"Good" Scenarios

Scenario A: Diem takes heart and also takes the measures needed to improve efficiency, with only the 8000 man force and US specialist help. Hanoi heeds our warning and lays low, so that control is reasserted in South Vietnam. (Laos is a big question mark here and in other Scenarios.)

Scenario B: The struggle continues to go against Diem, and his own efforts at improvement are feeble. Thus, the US moves into the driver's seat and eventually brings the situation under control, using forces on the scale of 25,000–75,000. Hanoi and Peiping do not intervene directly, and we do not attack Hanoi.

Scenario C: As the struggle becomes prolonged, the US strikes at Hanoi (or Hanoi and Peiping intervene overtly). The US wins the resulting conflict, i.e., obtains at least a restoration of the status quo, after inflicting such punishment on Hanoi and/or Peiping that further aggressive moves are forestalled for a long time to come.

"Bad" Scenarios

Scenario X: The US decides not to put in the 8000 men, or later forces, and Diem is gradually overcome.

Scenario Y: The US puts in the 8000 men, but when Diem fails to improve his performance pulls out and lets him be overcome.

Scenario Z: Moscow comes to the aid of Hanoi and Peiping, supplying all necessary equipment (including a limited supply of air-deliverable nuclear weapons to retaliate in kind against US use) so

[1] Top Secret. The following typewritten notation is at the top of the source text: "2nd Draft. W.P. Bundy. 7 Nov. 1961"

that the outcome is a stalemate in which great destruction is wreaked on the whole area.

Of these, only A is truly a good outcome from all long-term standpoints—it stiffens us generally vis-à-vis the Bloc, holds the area (save perhaps Laos), does not discomfit us unduly in the neutral world, excellent for domestic US will and drive. Only trouble is—it's unlikely! *However*, it is still so much better than any other that it is worth accepting some added degree of difficulty in achieving B and C to give A every chance to happen.

The choice between B and C is a hard one. Despite all our warnings and Jorden Report, our case of aggression against Hanoi will not convince neutrals of its accuracy and justice, or major allies of its wisdom and practicality. On the other hand, B is a road that has almost no end in sight. The US is poorly cast as a permanent protecting power, but the local capabilities would be so low at the end of such a struggle that we would almost have to assume that role. There is a very considerable chance that under continuing US protection, South Vietnam and the area as a whole would become a wasting asset and an eyesore that would greatly hamper all our relations worldwide. On the whole, the short-term onus attached to C may be preferable. However, as we play the hand toward C (especially if we use Moscow as the channel to Hanoi) we may well raise the chances of Moscow acting to bring on Z.

On the "bad" side, X and Z are clearly nightmares. Though X means loss of the area for a long time to come, it is probably better in the long run than Z. The chances of the Soviets acting to bring about Z do not appear great in the short run, but we must certainly try to keep those chances low (e.g., by making our dealings with Moscow private).

Y is also a nightmare. It loses the area. Moreover, vis-à-vis the Bloc it would be worse than X, since they would take it as an almost final proof that we would not stand up. It might have some compensating gains in the neutral world, at least in the short run. But on the whole it seems the worst possible outcome.

The basic strategic issues are:

a. How long to give A a chance?
b. Whether B is preferable to the weighted odds of C vs. Z?

Note on the Scale of US Intervention in South Vietnam

In deciding on the appropriate level of a possible US Intervention in Vietnam, it is important to consider the objective of preserving Vietnamese prestige. The preferred US outcome is for the Vietnamese, and Diem, to get credit for the defeat of the Communists with the help of the US. The next best outcome, a defeat of

the Communists as a consequence of large scale intervention on the part of the US is a distinctly inferior outcome to the former. Diem would very probably be discredited and progress toward the formation of a cohesive nation slowed.

The problem of a US take-over of the conflict hardly arises at the 6–8000 US troop level—especially if these troops are mostly engineers. It would seem to arise only if the scale of intervention is of the order of several divisions. (Even then the outcome of the war would be very largely dependent on the Vietnamese effort.) The introduction of a large US force may turn out to be necessary in any case. This would be so if Hanoi and Peiping intervened openly or if sizeable forces are needed in Laos. Short of such clear and urgent demands for a large US force on the scene we should restrict our effort to a level that leaves the burden primarily on the Vietnamese. The US role would be (1) to assist South Vietnam more actively in a variety of ways, and (2) to bail out the Vietnamese if things go badly.

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224. Memorandum From Lieutenant Commander Worth H. Bagley to the President's Military Representative (Taylor) [1]

Washington, November 7, 1961.

SUBJECT

Secretary McNamara's Memorandum for the President on the subject of South Viet-Nam [2]

1. My comments on Secretary McNamara's memorandum are as set forth below:

a. The basic issue framed by your report is not the decision for commitment to prevent the fall of South Viet-Nam to Communism. Rather, your report responds to a lesser scale objective, which can be altered up or down by later choice. There is advantage, however, in exploring the President's view now on an ultimate objective toward SEA as long as it can be done without detriment to the subtle actions you have recommended, which in fact permit a delayed decision.

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T–127–69 Top Secret

[2] Bagley was apparently referring to the draft memorandum described in footnote 2, Document 227, which was a later draft of Document 214.

2. The following comments are numbered the same as related paragraphs in the basic paper:

(1) A statement regarding Communist control of Southeast Asia should be expanded for the benefit of the President to include a clear statement as to the strategic implications of a neutral SEA as it will affect the US position worldwide.

(2) The suggestion that US forces be employed on a substantial scale indicates the purposes of your recommendations, as an entity, are not understood. The basic reason for introduction of US forces at this time is to remove all doubt as to the extent the US is committed to the defense of SVN and, further, to offset sagging morale in that area. It is not intended to accomplish any positive military task other than that of self-defense.

The US military presence will provide sustenance to encourage Diem to respond to the other measures you have recommended. The combination of these military and non-military measures, which in the context of the report are inseparable, if fully realized will increase confidence and Diem will in fact be set on the way to winning his own fight. The prospect is that US assistance will then diminish rather than increase. In this context, Secretary McNamara's interpretation of your judgment as to the potential of your recommendations is erroneous.

(3) In order to implement your recommendations, it is necessary to violate the 1954 Geneva Accords, and to acknowledge such violation. Present thinking as to the use of the Jorden report envisages publication of a White paper, tabled at the United Nations, which will be publicly used as the excuse for such violation. We are thus announcing to the world a radical increase in our assistance to SVN including placement there of a small American force. This will be a dramatic indication of our recognition of the vital interest SVN represents to our own national security, and should be just as convincing to the "other side" whether we commit 8,000 men or 80,000 men.

It should be noted, however, that renunciation of the Accords (though we do so on the basis of the US reservation attached thereto) is a double-edged sword. The Communists are then free to invade. It is here that our commitment must be clear as a defense for SVN.

We do not envisage US units having a positive military objective, so it is difficult to see how our forces can become mired down in an inconclusive struggle. If their presence, in conjunction with other measures, increases SVN capabilities to fight, the Viet-Cong will become less able to engage them. If this anticipated result does not occur, a new US decision will be required.

(4) A public commitment to a maximum objective in SVN seems unnecessary for the same basic reasoning as outlined above. If such an announcement were made it would decrease our flexibility and initiative. It is ironic that we continue to point with envy to the flexible and fluid tactics which Mao adherents follow and at the same time eliminate any possibility that we can retain similar advantages. The lack of such public announcement of our objectives does not, however, prevent the possibility of transmitting an appro-

priate diplomatic warning to Hanoi that their continued support of the Viet-Cong will lead to expanded action on our part.

(5) Recognition now that an expanded US participation in SVN could conceivably result in an enlarged conflict will add to the flexibility of the Taylor Program. If we recognize the requirements and provide for them, but do not publicly announce such an appreciation, our flexibility is enhanced because there is then no limit to the scale of action to which we can resort.

(6) When we publicly announce our violation of the 1954 Geneva Accords, and the reasons therefore based on the Jorden paper, it will be appropriate to advise the American people of our increased commitments in SVN. For the same reasoning as in subparagraph 3 above, this should be sufficient to explain any action that may subsequently be required even though our initial commitment of forces may be limited.

WHB[1]

[1] Printed from a copy that bears these typed initials.

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225. Editorial Note

The meeting to discuss Vietnam with the President, scheduled for November 7, was apparently postponed. No record has been found of such a meeting on that date, and the Kennedy Log Book, as well as the Taylor and Lemnitzer Appointment Books, show no record of such a meeting. The reason for the apparent postponement has not been determined, but may have been due to the President's heavy schedule of activities during the visit of Prime Minister Nehru.

The meeting was rescheduled for November 8, but that too was postponed. According to a memorandum of a telephone conversation between Rusk and McGeorge Bundy at 10:50 a.m. on November 8:

"B returned the call and the Sec said he spoke to the Pres about postponing the meeting today at 5 until later. He would like to shoot for the same time tomorrow. The Sec thinks those working on it have too simplified a view. B said McNamara said that. The Pres would rather wait until the Sec is ready. The Sec will stay with it and will alert B.

"Re the press conf—if asked about Taylor B thinks the Pres should say the report is still being studied and resist questions. The Sec said right and mentioned he would be over for lunch." (Department of State, Rusk Files: Lot 72 D 192, Telephone Calls)

Later that afternoon, at 3:40 p.m., Rusk called U. Alexis Johnson and asked him to inform McNamara and Taylor that there would be no meeting that afternoon. Thirty minutes later McNamara called Rusk and the following conversation took place:

"M asked when the Sec thinks we will have the meeting on South Vietnam. The Sec said it is a question of getting thoughts here and recommendations—it is more complicated than he supposed. He hopes tomorrow—will be in touch—we are trying to weave some political factors in but it is complicated." (*Ibid.*)

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226. Draft Memorandum From the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Lemnitzer) [1]

Washington, November 8, 1961.

SUBJECT

Timing and Visibility of Action to Assist South Vietnam

In the light of our discussion last night, [2] it is clear that there is great concern that the actions we take in the immediate future in South Vietnam will disrupt the possibility of a Souvanna settlement, including signature of Geneva agreements, which might otherwise be expected to take place within about a month. I think we must recognize that even the installation of a Souvanna government will not by any means eliminate the possibility of our having to take early action in Laos; the hope, however, is that such action would be in response to some breach of the situation by the other side. Otherwise, our political difficulties would be greatly multiplied—as they would be if our introduction of added elements into the Vietnam situation were blamed for upsetting the possibilities of a settlement.

Some of our discussion last night tended to assume that introduction of an 8000-man force (or some such number) would be a decisive event in determining reactions in Laos. I doubt if it is as

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OASD/ISA Files: FRC 64 A 2382, Vietnam 092 Nov. 1961. Top Secret. Drafted by William Bundy on November 8. A handwritten note in the margin reads: "Not used. All other copies destroyed."

[2] Lemnitzer's journal shows that he left the Pentagon at 5:40 p.m. with McNamara to attend a meeting at the Department of State. (National Defense University, Lemnitzer Papers, L-419-71) No record of this meeting was found.

black-and-white as this, and of course we must reckon that anything we say to Diem may lead in some way to reactions. What we need, however, is a very careful look at the successive military actions that we might take under the Taylor Report recommendations, the timing of these, their degree of visibility, and whether there is any way to frame plausible cover stories that would enable us to move forces into position without upsetting the apple cart. For example, the 8000-man force might be labelled as a reinforcement for Honolulu, or engaged in an exercise in the Philippines. In this connection, the use of an existing divisional staff organization, while surely much more efficient, may raise serious problems of publicity.

Could you look into these matters in a preliminary fashion and give me your best reading before the White House meeting this afternoon at 5:00?[3]

[3] See *supra*.

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227. Memorandum From the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) to the President[1]

Washington, November 8, 1961.

SUBJECT

South Vietnam

The basic issue framed by the Taylor Report is whether the U.S. shall:

a. Commit itself to the clear objective of preventing the fall of South Vietnam to Communism,[2] and

b. Support this commitment by necessary immediate military actions and preparations for possible later actions.

The Joint Chiefs, Mr. Gilpatric, and I have reached the following conclusions:

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Files: FRC 71 A 3470, SE Asia 1961. Top Secret. Also printed in *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pp. 343–344.

[2] On a November 7 draft of this memorandum, the following words were crossed out at this point: "thus holding the non-Communist areas of Southeast Asia,". (Department of State, Central Files, 611.51K/11-761) This is the only difference between the November 7 draft and the source text.

1. The fall of South Vietnam to Communism would lead to the fairly rapid extension of Communist control, or complete accommodation to Communism, in the rest of mainland Southeast Asia and in Indonesia. The strategic implications worldwide, particularly in the Orient, would be extremely serious.

2. The chances are against, probably sharply against, preventing that fall by any measures short of the introduction of U.S. forces on a substantial scale. We accept General Taylor's judgment that the various measures proposed by him short of this are useful but will not in themselves do the job of restoring confidence and setting Diem on the way to winning his fight.

3. The introduction of a U.S. force of the magnitude of an initial 8,000 men in a flood relief context will be of great help to Diem. However, it will not convince the other side (whether the shots are called from Moscow, Peiping, or Hanoi) that we mean business. Moreover, it probably will not tip the scales decisively. We would be almost certain to get increasingly mired down in an inconclusive struggle.

4. The other side can be convinced we mean business only if we accompany the initial force introduction by a clear commitment to the full objective stated above, accompanied by a warning through some channel to Hanoi that continued support of the Viet Cong will lead to punitive retaliation against North Vietnam.

5. If we act in this way, the ultimate possible extent of our military commitment must be faced. The struggle may be prolonged and Hanoi and Peiping may intervene overtly. In view of the logistic difficulties faced by the other side, I believe we can assume that the maximum U.S. forces required on the ground in Southeast Asia will not exceed 6 divisions, or about 205,000 men (CINCPAC Plan 32–59,[3] Phase IV). Our military posture is, or, with the addition of more National Guard or regular Army divisions, can be made, adequate to furnish these forces without serious interference with our present Berlin plans.

6. To accept the stated objective is of course a most serious decision. Military force is not the only element of what must be a most carefully coordinated set of actions. Success will depend on factors many of which are not within our control—notably the conduct of Diem himself and other leaders in the area. Laos will remain a major problem. The domestic political implications of accepting the objective are also grave, although it is our feeling that the country will respond better to a firm initial position than to courses of action that lead us in only gradually, and that in the meantime are sure to involve casualties. The over-all effect on

[3] Not found.

Moscow and Peiping will need careful weighing and may well be mixed; however, permitting South Vietnam to fall can only strengthen and encourage them greatly.

7. In sum:

a. We do not believe major units of U.S. forces should be introduced into South Vietnam unless we are willing to make an affirmative decision on the issue stated at the start of this memorandum.

b. We are inclined to recommend that we do commit the U.S. to the clear objective of preventing the fall of South Vietnam to Communism and that we support this commitment by the necessary military actions.

c. If such a commitment is agreed upon, we support the recommendations of General Taylor as the first steps toward its fulfillment.

Robert S. McNamara

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228. Draft Memorandum for the President [1]

Washington, November 8, 1961

SUBJECT

South Viet-Nam

The Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff agree:

1. The fall of South Viet-Nam to Communism would lead to the fairly rapid extension of Communist control, or complete accommodation to Communism, in the rest of mainland Southeast Asia and in Indonesia. The strategic implications worldwide, particularly in the Orient, would be extremely serious.

2. The chances are against, probably sharply against, preventing the fall of South Viet-Nam by any measures short of the introduction of U.S. forces on a substantial scale.

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-628-71. Top Secret. No drafting information is given on the source text except for the date, but the memorandum was apparently drafted in the Department of State. Document 230 refers to what apparently is this draft memorandum as the "State SEA Paper". Moreover, it seems to be an enlarged version of Document 222, which is five pages in manuscript form. A handwritten notation on the source text indicates that it is the "initial draft" of the November 11 memorandum to the President (see Document 234). Another handwritten notation indicates that the source text was discussed at the meeting with the Secretary of State on November 9, apparently a reference to the meeting described in Document 232.

3. It would be desirable if the fall of South Viet-Nam could be prevented without commitment of U.S. combat forces. It is our agreed judgment, as indicated above, that we cannot base a policy on that hope. On the other hand, if we proceed with the energy and confidence based upon a determination to see the matter through, and if this were made evident to both friend and foe, there might be opportunities to accomplish the objective without the actual commitment of the entire effort for which we would be prepared.

4. In a situation where a nation of twenty million people is being intimidated by an active force of fifteen to twenty thousand Viet Cong, it is obvious that the self-help of the Vietnamese and their attitude toward U.S. forces are crucial to success. U.S. and SEATO forces from outside Viet-Nam cannot accomplish our basic national objective without a determined effort by the Vietnamese. This factor constitutes the critical limitation on our own commitment.

Probable Extent of U.S. Commitment

If we commit combat forces to South Viet-Nam, the ultimate possible extent of our military commitment in Southeast Asia must be faced. The struggle may be prolonged, and Hanoi and Peiping may overtly intervene. It is the view of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff that, in the light of the logistic difficulties faced by the other side, we can assume that the maximum United States forces required on the ground in Southeast Asia would not exceed six divisions, or about 205,000 men. This would be in addition to local forces and such SEATO forces as may be engaged. It is also the view of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff that our military posture is, or, with the addition of more National Guard or regular Army divisions, can be made, adequate to furnish these forces [2] without serious interference with our present Berlin plans. [3]

Relation to Laos

It must be understood that the introduction of American combat forces into Viet-Nam prior to a Laotian settlement would run a considerable risk of stimulating a Communist breach of the cease fire and a resumption of hostilities in Laos. This could present us with a choice between the use of combat forces in Laos or an abandonment of that country to full Communist control. At the present time, there is at least a chance that a settlement can be reached in Laos on the basis of a weak and unsatisfactory Souvanna Phouma Government. [4] On the other hand, the introduction of U.S. forces into Viet-Nam

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[2] A handwritten insertion at this point reads, "and support them in action."

[3] Written above the final four words of this sentence are the words, "the discharge of our obligations", apparently intended as a suggested substitution.

[4] "When?" is written in the margin alongside this sentence.

after a Laotian settlement could serve to stabilize the position both in Viet-Nam and in Laos by registering our determination to see to it that the Laotian settlement was as far as the U.S. would be willing to see Communist influence in Southeast Asia develop.

Use of ICC and Geneva Conference Procedures

The question naturally arises whether Viet-Nam can be settled through the use of the ICC and a resort to a Geneva-type conference in an effort to find a negotiated settlement. The dangers in this procedure are very high, if our objective is to prevent a serious increase in Communist influence in Southeast Asia. South Viet-Nam resulted from the partition of Viet-Nam and represents that portion which is entitled to be free from Communist penetration or control. To embark upon a course of negotiation with the Sino-Soviet Bloc would acknowledge that the Communists are entitled to negotiate about South Viet-Nam alone and would mean that they would insist upon some sort of settlement comparable to that in Laos. We do not believe this is desirable or necessary, given the scale of Viet Cong action and the stronger position of the GVN and the greater accessibility of Viet-Nam to the United States and SEATO.

Action Short of U.S. Combat Forces

Our only hope of achieving some stabilization of the situation in South Viet-Nam without the commitment of the major[5] U.S. combat forces would seem to lie in:

1. The prompt revamping of the administrative and military command structure of the GVN;
2. Sharply increased U.S. military assistance to the GVN in airlift, intelligence, watercraft, and increased U.S. participation in the direction and control of GVN military operations;
3. Large-scale use of U.S. funds to act promptly to support flood relief and rehabilitation, increases in military and civilian pay, full supply of a wide range of materials such as food, medical supplies, transportation equipment, communications equipment, and any other items where material help could assist Diem in winning his own war;
4. The maximum political involvement of other nations, including neutrals.
5. A significant diminution in Communist support to the Viet Cong, brought about by a firm[6] indication to the Communist Bloc that we were prepared to do what was necessary to prevent further support of the Viet Cong.

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[5] The word "substantial" is written above "major."
[6] An illegible word is written above "firm."

It should be pointed out, however, that point 3 above, could not be accomplished unless we ourselves had first taken a clear decision to commit ourselves to the objective of preventing the fall of South Viet-Nam to Communism [7] including whatever U.S. combat forces may be required to accomplish this objective.

Multilateral Action

From the political point of view, both domestic and international, it would seem crucial to involve at least some combat [8] forces from other nations alongside of U.S. forces in Viet-Nam. It would be difficult to explain why no effort had been made to invoke SEATO or why the United States would have to carry this burden unilaterally. Our position would be greatly strengthened if the introduction of combat [9] forces could be taken as a SEATO action, accompanied by units of other SEATO countries, with a full SEATO report to the United Nations of the purposes and limitations of the action itself.

Recommendations

In the light of the foregoing, it is recommended that:

1. We now take the decision to commit ourselves to the objective of preventing the fall of South Viet-Nam [10] to Communism and the willingness to commit whatever United States combat [11] forces may be necessary to achieve this objective. (At such time as combat forces may be committed, they would at least initially be deployed into the area south of the 17th Parallel with the mission of being prepared to meet any overt North Vietnamese attack across the demilitarized zone and of relieving GVN forces presently deployed in that area for offensive operations.) [12]

2. We immediately undertake consultations initially with the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, and subsequently with other SEATO members to inform them of the foregoing decision and to obtain the widest possible SEATO participation. However, our

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[7] An alternate ending to this sentence is handwritten at this point: "including the introduction of a US military presence at once followed by whatever additional U.S. combat forces may be required to accomplish this objective."

[8] Handwritten brackets are around the word "combat" and a question mark is written in the margin.

[9] Handwritten brackets are around the word "combat" and "time?" is written in the margin.

[10] "SEA" is written above "South Viet-Nam" and "when act?" is written in the margin.

[11] Handwritten brackets are around "combat" and the word "military" is written above it.

[12] Handwritten brackets are around the phrase "for offensive operations" and "how many?" is written in the margin.

decision to act in South Viet-Nam is not contingent upon SEATO agreement[13] thereto.

3. We communicate our decision by suitable diplomatic means at an appropriate time to the Communist Bloc and selected friendly countries other than those in SEATO.[14]

4. We continue our efforts to obtain a settlement in Laos.

5. Ambassador Nolting be instructed to make an immediate approach to President Diem to the effect that the Government of the United States is prepared to join the Government of Viet-Nam in a massive joint effort to cope with the Viet Cong threat, and the ravages of the flood, if, on its part, the Government of Viet-Nam is prepared promptly to carry out an effective total mobilization of its own resources, both material and human, for the same end.

a. Specifically, the United States is prepared on its part to:

(1) Deploy U.S. combat forces to South Viet-Nam in the area south of the 17th Parallel to meet any overt North Vietnamese attack and to relieve SVN forces presently there for offensive operations against the Viet Cong;

(2) Invite SEATO members to participate in the above deployment, but will not be deterred by any lack of participation;

(3) Provide individual administrators for insertion into the Governmental machinery of South Viet-Nam in types and numbers to be agreed upon by the two governments;

(4) Assist the GVN in effecting surveillance and control over the coastal waters and inland waterways, furnishing such advisers, operating personnel and small craft as may be necessary for quick and effective operations;

(5) Reorganize MAAG-Viet-Nam and increase its size as may be necessary by the implementation of these recommendations;

(6) Review its economic aid program to take account of the needs of flood relief, to give priority to projects in support of the expanded counter insurgency program, and to supply material in support of the security effort;

(7) To support a request by the GVN to FAO or any other appropriate international organization for multilateral assistance in the rehabilitation of the flood area.

b. The United States believes that the following joint enterprises with the GVN are required:

(1) A joint effort to improve the military-political intelligence system beginning at the provincial level and extending

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[13] Written in the margin at this point is "any support?"

[14] Handwritten interpolations reverse the sequence of actions as follows: "We communicate our decision by suitable diplomatic means to selected friendly countries other than those in SEATO and at an appropriate time to the Com. Bloc."

upward through the Government and armed forces to the central intelligence organization;

(2) A joint survey of the conditions in the provinces to assess the social, political, intelligence, and military factors bearing on the prosecution of the counter-insurgency in order to reach a common estimate of these factors and a common determination of how to deal with them,

(3) A joint effort to free the army for mobile, offensive operations. This effort will be based upon improving the training and equipping of the civil guard and the self-defense corps, relieving the regular army of static missions, raising the level of the mobility of army forces by the provision of considerably more *helicopters* and *light aviation*, and organizing a *border ranger force* for a long-term campaign on the Laotian border against the Viet Cong infiltrators. The U.S. Government will support this joint effort with equipment *and with military units* and personnel to do those tasks which the armed forces of Viet-Nam cannot perform in time. Such tasks include *air reconnaissance* and *photography*, airlift (beyond the present capacity of SVN forces), *special intelligence*, and *air-ground support techniques*.

c. It is the view of the United States Government that the unilateral U.S. actions and the joint US-GVN undertakings listed in a and b above will succeed in defeating the Viet Cong only if

(1) They are accepted and carried out with the complete and unreserved approval of and cooperation by the GVN,

(2) The GVN takes appropriate legislative and administrative action to put the nation on a wartime footing to mobilize its entire resources,

(3) Establishes appropriate governmental wartime agencies with adequate authority to perform their functions effectively,

(4) Overhauls its military establishment and creates an effective organization to prosecute the war,

d. Before setting in motion the U.S. proposals listed above, the U.S. Government would appreciate confirmation of their acceptability to the GVN, and an expression from the GVN of the undertakings it is prepared to make to ensure the success of this joint effort

229. Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, Washington, November 9, 1961, 11:40 a.m. [1]

SUBJECT

Viet Nam

PARTICIPANTS

Mr. M.J. Desai, Foreign Secretary, Government of India
Mr. D.N. Chatterjee, Minister, Embassy of India
The Secretary
Phillips Talbot, Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asia
Rogers B. Morgan, Officer in Charge, India-Ceylon-Nepal

The Secretary requested Mr. Desai's estimate of the Indian influence on Hanoi.

Mr. Desai said it was now very little, mainly because of India's difficulties with China. The primary influence in Hanoi was held by the Soviet Union.

The Secretary said there was some debate here as to the relative ascendancy of Moscow's and Peiping's influence in Hanoi.

Mr. Desai remarked that Hanoi must pay court these days to Peiping but they try to keep as clear of Peiping influence as possible. In contrast, their relations with Moscow are firm. Washington can talk straight to Moscow and the Soviets will understand us. In turn, Hanoi will accept what Moscow says. If we try to relay messages through India or Yugoslavia, Hanoi will be uncertain how to interpret what Delhi or Belgrade says, and may well go to Moscow for advice on that point.

The Secretary pointed out the U.S. would have some difficulties over going directly to the Soviets on questions involving South Viet Nam. They would seize upon our approach as a negotiating point and try to become involved in the South Viet Nam situation, just as they are now in Laos.

Mr. Desai predicted that in such circumstances the USSR would ask for a discussion of the Viet Nam situation in a conference. He said, however, that he believed we would be able to satisfy them by taking the stand that unification could not possibly be negotiated under present circumstances, and then setting a date, such as 1963, for further talks on unification. (Mr. Desai did not make it clear whether he meant that the USSR would be satisfied with this answer in bilateral talks with us, or whether he envisaged that a

[1] Source: Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 65 D 366, CF 1990. Secret. Drafted by Morgan and approved in the Office of the Secretary on November 17. The time of the meeting is taken from Rusk's Appointment Book. (Johnson Library, Rusk Appointment Books)

conference would be brought to agree on such an arrangement. In earlier conversations, notably his conversation with the Secretary on November 7,[2] Mr. Desai had reported that he had advised Ambassador Harriman against trying to solve the Viet Nam situation by the conference method. He feels that at a conference there will be a demand for unification by elections as envisaged in the 1954 Geneva accord.)

The Secretary remarked that in Viet Nam, as in other situations, the U.S. is being asked to negotiate and make concessions in order to get the other side to cease and desist from what amounts to highway robbery by them.

Mr. Desai demurred from this view of the Viet Nam situation, saying that the other side has some justification in its claim that the 1954 agreements have never been carried out. The Secretary dismissed this line of reasoning by pointing out that since 1943 it is hard to find an agreement we have had with the USSR that has not been violated by them. Mr. Desai responded by merely noting that violation of agreements between opponents was not unusual in international affairs, Pakistani agreements with India having often been violated.

The Secretary told Mr. Desai that, looking beyond the present situation in Viet Nam, if it were not possible to bring to a stop the present Communist activity there, and if the solution in Laos were to prove unsatisfactory, there would be a strong possibility that the United States would pull out of Southeast Asia very fast and simply "take the area off our agenda."

Mr. Desai responded by suggesting that we need not take a pessimistic view. In Laos, for example, we can count on the fact that Souvanna Phouma needs our aid, so that we can put much pressure on him.

The Secretary noted that it was Souphanouvong who is dragging his feet on reaching agreement now. Mr. Desai noted that for the past several years Souphanouvong has had to rely on the Viet Minh for everything. It will take a while to rehabilitate him; he cannot be expected to turn his back on his benefactors overnight. Mr. Desai implied, however, that he believed Souphanouvong could be rehabilitated, relying on the fundamental Laotian dislike of the Vietnamese.

The conversation then turned to the consideration of the Joint Communique to be issued by the President and the Prime Minister in the afternoon.[3]

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[2] See Document 221.

[3] For text of the joint communique issued on November 9, see Department of State *Bulletin*, December 4, 1961, pp. 927–928.

230. Memorandum From Lieutenant Commander Worth H. Bagley to the President's Military Representative (Taylor) [1]

Washington, November 9, 1961

SUBJECT

State SEA Paper [2]

Page 1

Paragraph 2—Reference to "substantial forces" apparently assumes the lower-tone approach you have recommended is not viable. On one hand, our forces are to boost GVN morale, show our resolve, and provide a boost to Diem's making necessary organizational changes; on the other hand, US forces are to take up the sword and try to win the war.

Page 3

Ready availability of sea, air, and logistic forces assumed here. This is not consistent with past statements of SecDef. Should be clarified.

Page 4

If we have warned Bloc of our objectives in SVN before placing troops there, NVN will think twice before supporting Pathet Lao resumption of hostilities in Laos.

What is Harriman view?

If a US force commitment in SVN is urgent (this question is not faced in the State paper), it should not be delayed to complete an "unsatisfactory" settlement in Laos.

As we enter SVN, tell Bloc we intend remain constant to negotiations in Laos as long as fighting is not resumed.

Pages 6–7

There is every reason to believe that the Taylor Mission eliminated the possibility that significant changes in SVN can be achieved without the encouraging presence of US forces. This fact must be hammered home. If the Vietnamese want us on the ground, the opinion elsewhere is of little account—at least if we truly want SVN to help itself and thereby avoid a large US force commitment later.

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-127-69. Top Secret.
[2] See footnote 1, Document 228.

Pages 7–8.

If the Task Force envisaged is given an international flavor or strength beyond the initial needs, it is probable that its low-tone application will be lost and it will take on more of the attributes of a combat force deployed for offensive operations. This will then degrade the basic objective of prompting the GVN to organize to win the war essentially without external combat assistance.

Page 8.

If US forces are placed near 17th parallel:

How are flood relief units protected?

Will effect on population be lost since US troops are not visible as they would be in Delta?

If object is to defend line, it can be done better by amphibious force steaming in vicinity of parallel.

Is it not provocative without reason?

Does it not require larger US commitment than would otherwise be needed at outset?

General

Program is blunt. Loses "test" flavor of your recommendations which are more apt to prod Diem to action. As written, State paper emphasizes too much a large, inflexible US commitment for all to see.

Depending on how implemented, State paper may require dictating changes to Diem which will put joint effort on poor basis. A better alternative is your program which envisages a softer approach with no less hard end-objective.

Timing throughout State paper is vague. This should be clarified.

WHB[1]

[1] Printed from a copy that bears these typed initials.

231. Memorandum From the Acting Secretary of Defense (Bundy) to the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) [1]

Washington, November 9, 1961.

SUBJECT

Comments on South Vietnam Threat

Basic

1. The paper [2] does not say whether we will in fact send combat forces and if so when. Does it mean "take the seven steps and then test" or what? If it means "make the commitment and take only the seven steps," then I would agree with George Ball that this is the worst of both worlds.

2. The combat forces scheme is most undesirable militarily, and was so pointed out three weeks ago by JCS.[3] The border area is not an area of major Viet Cong activity, it is unhealthy and difficult to operate in, and easy to bypass for the Viet Cong. Either the Kontum plateau or the Delta "flood relief" force make much more sense, and I for one see no compensating political edge to the idea in the draft. The Kontum area has a good border-holding explanation.

3. The timing of action is not covered. In particular, the relation to Laos is left hanging. Does the draft mean wait at all costs till Laos is buttoned up? If so, it may be indefinite and futile, and in itself condemn us to the "seven points" only. On the other hand, it is true that if we rely on sea lift the time of transit from the US (35 days) or Hawaii (25–30 days since shipping has to come from the US) would itself mean that, even if we decided now, we could hold the impact of arrival of the major force off till a month from now. If the movement leaked, we could argue a maneuver with at least faint plausibility. By airlift or use of Okinawa forces we can of course get some forces in quicker—a week by sea from Okinawa, 7–10 days to get a brigade from the US by air . . . .[4] However, on this whole question of relation to Laos, the tough question is whether the cat won't be out of the bag the moment we say to Diem that we will send forces. To me, the draft judgment that there is "considerable risk" of the other side moving in Laos is a bit over-stated. There is a risk, all right, but the right noises would help keep it down—and it

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Files: FRC 71 A 3470, SE Asia 1961, Top Secret. The time of receipt in the Office of the Secretary of Defense is stamped on the source text as 2:20 p.m., November 9.

[2] See footnote 1, Document 228.

[3] Presumably a reference to Document 190.

[4] Ellipsis in the source text.

doesn't wholly go away even with a settlement. This again argues against too fixed calculation on the timing of a settlement.

4. The paper does not mention the issue of honoring the Laos border. This does hinge on a settlement. If there is one, or about to be one, my own judgment is that we would be wiser, net, to honor the border. However, we might have to change later if the flow kept up—and the odds are that it would.

Lesser

5. On SEATO help, seek it by all means, but let's not wait long on this. Accord on not accepting any veto.

6. On when to tell the Soviets (page 9), to tell them right away would run the risk of appeals for a conference, and our having to reject this before we even move men in. One answer might be to move some few men in and tell the Soviets coincidentally. Enough to show we mean business, not so large it makes the whole thing clearly unnegotiable.

William P. Bundy

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232. Notes of a Meeting, Department of State, Washington, November 9, 1961, 4:36 p.m.[1]

Sec. State read p. 1[2] aloud. Argument on "extremely." Rusk questioned "sharply against," par. 3 & 4.

I raised question of what is the obj.

Secy. Def. would put his first par. 1st p. 8.

I objected to parenthetical remarks. I stated that we must have a clear statement of the mil. objective before we rec[ommend] a force to accomplish it.

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Lemnitzer Papers, 1–216–71, Secret, Hand-written by Lemnitzer. According to the source text, the following people were present at the meeting: Rusk, McNamara, Gilpatric, Nitze, Lemnitzer, William Bundy, Harriman, Ball, U. Alexis Johnson, Taylor, and Rostow. According to Rusk's Appointment Book, he met at 4:36 p.m. on November 9 to discuss Vietnam with Ball, McNamara, Gilpatric, Lemnitzer, Rostow, Nitze, Taylor, William Bundy, and U. Alexis Johnson. Harriman joined the meeting at 5:06 p.m. The next appointment shown was a 6:41 p.m. meeting with McNamara alone. (Johnson Library, Rusk Appointment Books)

[2] Reference is apparently to the draft paper described in footnote 1, Document 228.

Sec State insisted on discussing troop deployment rather than face real issue of troops.

Rostow believes it would be easier to get SEATO into the 17th area rather than in the plateau area.

Rusk leans strongly toward introducing administrators, MAAG, etc—it does not commit US as does combat forces. Reluctant to put in US forces until Diem makes a 100% effort in his area. Cited US pulling out students, etc., while VN students stay in school. What domestic case can be made for such a step?

Harriman—para 5 line 8—suggests we have a conference before we put forces in—would confront . . .[1]

Rostow—Desai says that if you try to deal with ICC before troops you have no bargaining power.

Harriman believes we should have a showdown with plan ready. If you put in troops there is no real negotiation possible with Russians.

Nitze believes introduction of US forces will result in stepping up infiltration.

Sec State—to Harriman. Will putting US forces in VN blow open Laotian situation?

Harriman—Yes. World does not consider that VC are supported from North—they believe it is Diem's fault. Time schedule—release Jorden report. Talks with USSR within a few days.

Rusk—national interest obj. What we should do. Scenario—diplomatic moves.

[1] Ellipsis in the source text.

233. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President[1]

Washington, November 11, 1961.

Mr. Rusk will table this morning a proposal for action in Viet Nam[2] that stops short of installing U.S. forces now, but commits us—in our minds—to a full scale U.S. effort to save that country.

[1] Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-028-71. Top Secret. A handwritten note on the source text reads: "Gen. Taylor *only*—no further distribution." Neither the original nor any other copy of this memorandum has been found at the Kennedy Library.

[2] See *infra*.

I appreciate, of course, the difficulty of the decision and the reasons for reserving this move; but I should like to set out as clearly as I can the reasons for placing some minimal U.S. ground force in Viet Nam as part of the initial package.

This problem has been bedevilled by confusion about the various things a U.S. force could initially accomplish: from fighting in the paddies and jungles (which no one proposes), to guarding engineer units. To simplify the matter, I shall make the case for placing immediately a U.S. (or SEATO) force of (say) 5,000 men on the 17th Parallel.[3]

1. From the point of view of Southeast Asia, this is the gut issue and gut decision they are awaiting. Our case for asking a great deal from Diem would be strengthened if this threshold in U.S. action were passed.

2. Without the troop commitment, the Communists (who have been reading of our fears of white men in Asia and of Nehru's line on Ho Chi Minh) will believe they still have plenty of room for maneuver and to continue infiltration. An ambiguous signal to them is dangerous, and, whatever the rhetoric, they will interpret our policy by deeds, not words. The deeds proposed are, indeed, ambiguous.

3. When we publish the Jorden Report and enlarge the MAAG, we shall be declaring the 1954 Accords are being violated and we propose to deal with the consequences of that violation, until the Accords are re-established. We cannot carry out the agreed seven steps without grossly exceeding the 1954 advisory ceiling. Under these circumstances, the question arises: What is there to protect South Viet Nam from the North Viet Nam divisions if the 1954 Accord is in temporary abeyance? A U.S. (or SEATO) force on the Parallel would provide an unambiguous answer.

4. If we go into a negotiation on Viet Nam with U.S. forces in place on the 17th Parallel, we have a bargaining counter for a return to the Geneva Accords, namely, the withdrawal of our troops. Otherwise, as Desai pointed out, a negotiation about Viet Nam might be turned simply into a negotiation about South Viet Nam. In short, the presence of the U.S. force would give us the element which we badly lacked in the Laos negotiation, which led many of us, including Harriman, to urge the installation of SEATO Plan 5 in May.

Aside from these four specific points, there is a general attitude in the State Department paper which I regard as dangerous. It would inhibit U.S. action on our side of the truce lines of the Cold War for

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[3] Neither the place nor the figure are essential to the argument. As an initial point of disposition, I like the Parallel because it fits the diplomatic situation described in paragraph 3, below. I say 5,000 men because I understood from the MAAG adviser to the 1st ARVN division that static duty on the parallel was now being done by 3,500 men (half the division), and U.S. forces could relieve them. On the other hand, 5,000 seemed a rough minimum U.S. unit that could protect itself. [Footnote in the source text.]

fear of enemy escalation. The lesson of the post-war, it seems to me, is that we must be prepared on our side of the line to do whatever we believe necessary to protect our own and the Free World's interest. No one is proposing that we liberate North Viet Nam. No one is proposing at this stage—although the issue may have to be faced—selective action in North Viet Nam if Communist infiltration does not stop. General Taylor's proposals are, in my view, conservative proposals for action on our side of the Cold War truce lines, to buy time and permit negotiation to take over for an interval, under reasonably favorable circumstances. I think it unwise to inhibit ourselves in these regions for fear of what the enemy may do by way of reaction.

The steps proposed—including those which are now agreed—should, of course, not be taken unless we are deeply prepared for all the possible consequences. But, if the enemy goes to war—in Laos, South Viet Nam, or both—because of our actions on our side of the line, it means he has already decided to take Southeast Asia by whatever means are necessary; and that his actions up to this point simply meant that he was prepared to take South Viet Nam by cheap means and Laos by slow means, if possible. If he goes to war because of what we do on our side of the line, it does not mean that he went to war because of what we did. It means he had already determined to face war rather than forego victory in South Viet Nam, and that only our surrender of South Viet Nam could prevent war.

Because of this assessment, I question the State Department's judgment on the relation between the introduction of U.S. troops and a Laos settlement. The Communist problem is to decide whether or not they are prepared to fight the U.S. (or SEATO) in Southeast Asia.

A final thought. With respect to both Cuba and Laos our legal and moral case was ambiguous. It was impossible in our kind of society to rally the full weight of American authority behind the military enterprises in those areas. The case of South Viet Nam is clean. We know it; the enemy knows it; and, in their hearts, the knowledgeable neutrals know it; e.g., Desai. The Jorden Report will, I believe, be widely persuasive. If we move without ambiguity—without the sickly pallor of our positions on Cuba and Laos—I believe we can unite the country and the Free World; and there is a better than even chance that the Communists will back down and bide their time. This we should cheerfully accept; because the underlying forces in Asia are with us, if we do not surrender and vigorously exploit them.

234. Editorial Note

On November 11, the Departments of State and Defense prepared a memorandum for the President which, according to a covering memorandum from U. Alexis Johnson to McGeorge Bundy, was intended for the discussion with the President at noon that day (see Document 236). Copies were sent to Taylor and Rostow. (Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series) The text of the memorandum for the President is in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pages 359–367.

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235. List of Questions Prepared by the President [1]

Washington, November 11, 1961

Questions for the Meeting on South Vietnam 12:00, November 11, 1961

1. Will this program be effective without including the introduction of a U.S. troop task force?

2. What reasons shall we give Diem for not acceding to his request for U.S. troops?

3. Under what circumstances would we reconsider our decision on troops? How are we relating their possible introduction to the Laotian negotiations?

4. Is the U.S. commitment to prevent the fall of South Vietnam to Communism to be a public act or an internal policy decision of the U.S. Government?

5. To what extent is our offer of help to Diem contingent upon his prior implementation of the reform measures which we are proposing to him?

6. I note the view of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff contained in paragraph 5, page 3. [2] Does our ability to support forces in action include those of our Allies as well as U.S. forces?

7. How will we organize the execution of this program (a) in Washington, (b) in Saigon?

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-642D-71. Secret. Also printed in *Declassified Documents, 1976*, p. 210F.

[2] Reference is to the memorandum discussed *supra*.

8. How do you propose to proceed now in bringing this matter to me as a coordinated recommendation?

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236. Notes of a Meeting, The White House, Washington, November 11, 1961, 12:10 p.m.[1]

Rusk: Reviewed situation—U.S. interests, situation now, relationship with Laos. Discussed disproportionate ratio of U.S. forces (except ROK) in Korea during Korean War, SEATO possibilities, neutral possibilities. Helicopters—discussion of each step under 3.[2]

P: Par. 3 items sound like Laos. Question of international character a la Phils, Thais, Aussies, etc.

Taylor: Could be useful in flood relief.

P: How can we make Diem govt more palatable?

Rostow: Flood.

P: We have a congressional prob. Sen. Russell & others are opposed.

Rusk: Line with ICC would be that enemy has broken agreement—we will return to adherence when enemy does.

P: Troops are a last resort. Should be SEATO forces. Will create a tough domestic problem. Would like to avoid statements like Laos & Berlin.

Atty Gen: Statement from P. is required in connection with Taylor mission. We are not sending combat troops. [We are] not committing ourselves to combat troops. Make it much SEATO as possible.

Secy McNamara & I made it clear that JCS and Sec Def conclude that proposed actions will not by themselves solve this problem and that further action will be required.

P: Will draft letter to Diem.

Secy State: Rec[ommended] general approval of approach.

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Lemnitzer Papers, L-214-71. Top Secret. Handwritten by Lemnitzer. According to the notes, the meeting was attended by the President, Rusk, U. Alexis Johnson, McConaughy, Robert Kennedy, Cabell, Taylor, Rostow, McGeorge Bundy, Nitze, Lemnitzer, and McNamara. According to the President's log book, he met on November 11 from 11:50 a.m. to noon with Taylor and Rostow and from noon to 1:55 p.m. with Rusk, McNamara, Lemnitzer, and Taylor. (Kennedy Library, JFK Log Books) No other record of this meeting has been found.

[2] Reference is to the memorandum discussed in Document 234.

P: Will not decide now re point 1 of the rec[ommendations]. Will it mean a war with China? Will not go that far as to approve. Approve 2, 3 & 4.

Sec Def: We will work on 2, 3, 4, & 6 without taking actions.

Taylor: Under 3 which is irrevocable we should move now.

P: I am ready to approve 3. Will not accept 1. Will go for 3. Want it to be as multilateral as possible.

Johnson: Line clearly drawn in VN—it was not in Laos.

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237. Editorial Note

On November 11, Robert G.K. Thompson of the British Advisory Mission in Saigon sent a letter to President Diem to which was attached a memorandum outlining a plan for clearing the Viet Cong from the delta area. Also attached to the letter was a note dealing with various intelligence matters. Copies of the letter and the memorandum were also given to the United States Embassy in Saigon and were transmitted to the Department of State as attachments to despatch 205, November 20. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11–2061) The note on intelligence was apparently not given to the United States Embassy. Thompson's letter and the attached memorandum are printed in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pages 345–358.

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238. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President [1]

Washington, November 12, 1961.

At your request I have read again SNIE 10–4–61, "Probable Communist Reactions to Certain U.S. Actions in South Viet-Nam."[2]

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series. Top Secret. Initialed by Rostow.

[2] Not printed. A note on the source text indicates that a copy of SNIE 10–4–61 was attached to the source text, but this copy, which Rostow marked for the President, has not been found.

1. By and large—with one major exception—I agree with the estimate. The sentence which I would question is on page 6: "Nevertheless these developments are not likely to substantially alter (*sic*) Communist China's attitudes towards military commitments in Southeast Asia." I do not see how a country which is depending on Australia and Canada for a critical margin for feeding its cities, which is probing to see if it can get PL 480 grain, and whose agriculture and industry are disorganized in a crisis which will take several years at best to surmount, would go to war except as a suicidal act. The present Communist leaders have a long view of history and a great faith in the future of China. There is no evidence that they are in a suicidal mood. Mao's basic precept has always been: "If the enemy attacks, I disappear; if he defends, I harass; and if he retreats, I attack." Under present circumstances I believe that Communist China would be in a mood to postpone its advance into Southeast Asia even at the expense of what they would regard as a temporary stabilization of the Free World's position in South Viet-Nam so long as we did not cross the 17th parallel with forces on the ground and threaten to liberate North Viet-Nam. Then—but only then—do I believe they would go to war with us.

2. Fundamentally the assessment in the SNIE is in accord with this judgment. It suggests that the actions taken by the U.S. would lead to essentially defensive responses.[3] See, for example, the marked passages on pages 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15 and 16.

3. I have marked one passage on page 13 with an "X". This passage suggests the possibility that if it looked as though South Viet-Nam were winning out over the Communists in South Viet-Nam, the Communists would consider sending North Vietnamese regular units into South Viet-Nam, although they would recognize this action would raise the risks of broadening the war. As I said to you in my memorandum of yesterday,[4] whether they would go to war in Southeast Asia depends on their assessment of U.S. strength and determination. Thus far their whole operation has been designed to bypass U.S. military strength, both nuclear and conventional. I do not believe that they would go to war in Southeast Asia merely to save a Communist foothold in South Viet-Nam; and the whole argument of SNIE 10–4–61 tends to bear this out.

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[3] Even selective air attack on North Vietnam [Handwritten footnote in the source text]

[4] Document 233

239. Letter From the Ambassador at Large (Harriman) to the President [1]

Washington, November 12, 1961.

MR. PRESIDENT: I have given a copy of this draft memorandum to Dean Rusk. He asked me to tell you his comment "It is a matter of timing" bearing in mind "other communications" on the same subject.

Averell

[Attachment]

Draft Memorandum Prepared by the Ambassador at Large (Harriman)

Washington, November 11, 1961.

This memorandum outlines a diplomatic-political course of action in Viet-Nam. It is put forward as offering the possibility of avoiding heavy United States military commitments with attendant risk and at the same time preventing the loss of South Viet-Nam to the Communists. The chance of its success cannot be estimated but it does not preclude other actions should it fail. Moreover, there are some indications that the Soviet Union would be interested in the establishment of a peaceful and stable situation in Southeast Asia, at least for a time.

Every effort should be made to bring the present Laos negotiations to a rapid conclusion—at Geneva and in Laos. Then certain commitments, already agreed to, would become operative, namely not to use Lao territory against any country with the undertaking by the U.S.S.R. as a co-chairman to police Communist-bloc observance. Compliance or noncompliance with this provision could be promptly ascertained.

The course here suggested involves a direct approach to the U.S.S.R., through our present relationship at the Geneva Conference on Laos. Thus there is hope for a fairly quick reading on the prospect for success.

1. *Tactical:* Concurrently with the publication of the "Jorden Report", Harriman would be authorized to approach Pushkin at

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam County Series. Personal. Handwritten by Harriman.

Geneva. He would recall that Pushkin has often said the Soviet Union is interested in a stable and peaceful situation in Southeast Asia. The progress made toward the settlement of the Laos question is meaningless if hostilities continue in neighboring Viet-Nam. The United States believes that an effort should be made to resolve that situation peacefully and end the aggression against SVN. The violation of the 1954 Accords by NVN has caused the United States to support SVN. A peaceful settlement should be built on the foundation of the 1954 Accords. The U.S.S.R. and the United Kingdom, as co-chairmen, should bring together a small group of the powers directly concerned to review the Accords to see how compliance can be secured and how they can be strengthened to meet today's needs. If this small group of powers could agree on measures to this end, the co-chairmen could present the results of their work to the Geneva Conference as a whole for ratification. The powers which would be engaged in this review would be the U.K., U.S.S.R., United States, Communist China, France, North Viet-Nam, South Viet-Nam, and India (perhaps). Although France is not as directly concerned as the others we cannot afford the resentment which would be caused by excluding her. As chairman of the ICC and the largest free country in the general region, India could make an important contribution if it so desired. This group of seven or eight powers, comprising those most directly interested, would be broadly representative enough to ensure that its conclusions would be adopted by the Conference as a whole and it would be small enough to be workable.

If the initial talks with Pushkin seemed promising, it might be necessary for final arrangements to be made at Moscow by Thompson, possibly with Harriman.

2. *The General Character of the Settlement We Are Prepared to Contemplate*

(a) Cessation of hostilities, if possible before discussion of other points is begun.

(b) Acceptance for the time being of the division of Viet-Nam with non-interference of any kind by one side in the other's affairs.

(c) Mutual renunciation of the use of force against each other by North and South Viet-Nam and agreement that eventual reunification be sought only through peaceful means. (We should not preclude a restudy of the possibility of elections as a matter of strategy.)

(d) Mutually advantageous trade and economic relations between North and South Viet-Nam. (This appears of greater importance to NVN).

(e) Strengthened and modernized ICC, or possibly some substitute mechanism for observation and enforcement.

(f) Under these conditions we might be prepared to adhere to the Accords as revised.

Harriman would be authorized to put forward these points with Pushkin as a basis of negotiations. (Supporting staff studies on each of them should begin at once.) In the course of his discussions, Harriman could point out that the level of our military assistance and the size of MAAG in South Viet-Nam are obviously related to the seriousness of the military situation there. As hostilities are brought under control and as the situation demonstrates stability, the natural consequence would be a concomitant reduction in U.S. military aid and advice.

3. *The Internal Situation in South Viet-Nam.* The best any international settlement can do is to buy time. If the Government of South Viet-Nam continues a repressive, dictatorial and unpopular regime, the country will not long retain its independence. Nor can the United States afford to stake its prestige there. We must make it clear to Diem that we mean business about internal reform. This will require a strong ambassador who can control all U.S. activities (political, military, economic, etc.), and who is known by Diem to have the personal intimacy and confidence of the President and the Secretary. Additional military aid and increased U.S. participation with SEATO support should be promptly provided as necessary to hold the line, and to improve the present dangerous situation, both in gaining ground militarily as well as in building public morale.

4. *The International Situation.* Based on the "Jorden Report" world public opinion should be developed to understand the true nature of NVN aggression. Our actions with SEATO support must be clearly but firmly presented as necessary to permit the people of SVN to retain their freedom, but are limited in duration to the emergency. We cannot afford to face again the situation we have in Laos where most of world opinion, including some of our close allies, believe we have acted unwisely, to put it mildly, in attempting to dominate that country.

5. *Other Alternatives.* Major military commitment as well as possible UN initiative should be held in reserve as long as direct negotiations seemed to be making progress.

240. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, November 12, 1961—7:31 p.m.

587. Eyes only for Ambassador. Embtel 635. [2] While I recognize cogency of arguments you have advanced for immediate brief period consultation Washington, believe that we cannot afford inevitable delay in implementation action program based on Taylor Report (forthcoming Deptel) which would result from your absence from your post at this time. I feel that you should personally and immediately conduct complex and delicate negotiations with Diem which are condition precedent for launching of this ambitious program on which so much hinges. We estimate that trip you suggest would result in delay of two weeks in getting this effort under way. Such a delay unacceptable when time crucial factor.

We regret now that you were not instructed to come to Washington for consultation when General Taylor returned. Since this was not done, we have no choice but to postpone any Washington consultation for present.

Rusk

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11–1361. Secret; Priority; Eyes Only. Drafted by McConaughy, cleared in draft with Johnson (G) and the Secretary, and signed for the Secretary by McConaughy.

[2] In telegram 635, November 13 (received in the Department on November 12 at 6:09 a.m.), and sent eyes only for the Secretary, Nolting asked for permission to return to Washington for a brief period of consultation regarding Vietnam. He gave the following as the main reasons for his request:

"1. I believe I can help mold plan which will fit here, in any event I should see and discuss details of what's being developed before it is finalized.

"2. It would be most valuable—from standpoint of correct understanding of Washington intentions and of Embassy and Task Force authority in executing U.S. plans—if I could personally bring back President's decision. (Standing of those on spot here was inevitably diminished—to the benefit, I hope and believe, of the cause—by Mission sent from Washington under its expressed terms of reference and attendant publicity.)" (*Ibid.*)

241. Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, Washington, November 13, 1961, 10:33 a.m.[1]

SUBJECT

Viet-Nam

PARTICIPANTS

The Secretary

Ambassador Herve Alphand, French Embassy
Mr. Marcel Barthelemy, First Secretary, French Embassy

Mr. L. Dean Brown, WE
Mr. Chalmers B. Wood, SEA

The Ambassador came in to discuss Viet-Nam in light of General Taylor's mission.

The Secretary said he would not try to give a run-down of General Taylor's report but would outline what we intend to do. We plan to take the necessary measures which will make it possible for Viet-Nam to win its own war. We will put in additional economic and ordinary military assistance and supply some types of support the Vietnamese cannot supply themselves. The latter will include American-manned photo reconnaissance and airlift capability. We will supply personnel and certain equipment to assist reorganizing parts of the government and its intelligence functions. More military instructors will be made available at lower levels within the Vietnamese forces so as to overcome immobility. Food will be supplied in connection with flood relief. We will provide assistance so as to enable the Vietnamese to block Viet-Minh movement by sea.

The Secretary continued by saying Diem must reorganize to give authority to civilian and military parts of his government so that these can operate effectively without his direct supervision. National mobilization of Viet-Nam is the goal. We do not, however, visualize sending U.S. forces of the battle-group type, although this may become necessary later.

The Ambassador said that the French Government fears that the U.S. will send fighting forces, perhaps starting with engineers.

The Secretary replied that the idea of sending engineers had been dropped as the flood is now receding. We will, instead, backstop Vietnamese flood relief efforts with supplies.

The Ambassador expanded on French opposition to U.S. troops. First, no pretext should be given the Soviets to make trouble at

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-1361. Secret. Drafted by Brown and approved in the Office of the Secretary of State on November 20. The time of the meeting is from the Secretary of State's Appointment Book. (Johnson Library, Rusk Appointment Books)

Geneva. Second, the Soviets should not be given a pretext to intervene in mass in Viet-Nam.

The Secretary said we share the concern. So far as the second point is concerned, intervention is already on a large scale and is increasing. It is now company-sized forces with Western weapons. Three Viet-Minh regiments may be involved.

The Ambassador continued by stating the West is in a bad position to fight in Viet-Nam as the French know by experience. It would be disastrous to lose Viet-Nam but France does not want to see the involvement of forces escalated by the introduction of American troops.

The Secretary replied that we cannot see the story of Laos repeated in Viet-Nam. Friendly and United States public opinion would not accept this; isolationism would increase. NATO allies have questioned our resolve on Laos. Laos is a bad precedent. We press Phoumi to negotiate while the other side concedes nothing. If the result of Geneva does not lead to a genuine coalition and true neutrality but rather to a disguised surrender, then it is difficult to see how the United States can sign the Geneva accords or convince the American people that a neutral Laos has been established. In Viet-Nam, meantime, the Soviets blandly aid the Viet-Minh and say that all that is taking place is a popular revolt against Diem. They see no need to compromise if they can pick-up Southeast Asia without it. We are seeking to build up Vietnamese morale through our assistance, realizing that it is up to the Vietnamese government to do the main job.

The Ambassador asked if the United States position is that it will not now send forces but will not discard the possibility.

The Secretary replied affirmatively. We realize that sending troops would represent a risk. It might be a greater risk not to send them. If Southeast Asia is lost, our alliances throughout the world will be affected. The United States must look across the Pacific as well as the Atlantic. This attitude is different than that of Western European countries.

The Ambassador said he wished to sum up his government's views which he believed were shared by the British: it favors U.S. support of Vietnamese forces but believes the introduction of American forces would have a bad result.

The Secretary replied that the loss of Southeast Asia would be more important to the U.S. than to Europe. We hope that we can work together, but if the issue comes to be one of the possible loss of Southeast Asia and our European friends do not agree with our policies to prevent this, then our paths may have to diverge.

242. Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation Between the Secretary of State and the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson), Washington, November 13, 1961, 2:08 p.m.[1]

[Here follows the beginning of the conversation regarding Laos.]

Mr. Johnson asked if the Sec. had gotten the message from the NSC on Vietnam.[2] Johnson said he had tried to discourage General Taylor and according to Taylor the Pres. was receptive. Johnson said he had told Taylor he thought we had our decisions and that there was no necessity for another meeting. Mr. Johnson said that Gen. Taylor was on his way to talk to the Vice President now. The only ones left out were the Vice President and Dillon. Johnson said he had had word that McNamara was agreeable if the Secretary was. He said we could check the paper out with Dillon and Murrow without having a meeting. The Sec. asked if they had indicated they wanted to wait until after NSC mtg., adding he would talk to Taylor by phone.[3]

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[1] Source: Department of State, Rusk Files: Lot 72 D 192, Telephone Calls. Transcribed by Mildred Asbjornson of the Office of the Secretary.

[2] Not further identified, but it apparently pertained to the scheduling of another meeting on Vietnam.

[3] At 2:15 p.m., Rusk called Johnson, who said "we would have to move quickly—Galbraith had been working hard on this." Johnson said he was "a little worried" since he had given Galbraith a copy of the draft instructions to be sent to Nolting. (Department of State, Rusk Files: Lot 72 D 192, Telephone Calls) For Rusk's subsequent telephone conversation with Taylor, see Document 244.

243. Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, Washington, November 13, 1961, 3:16 p.m.[1]

SUBJECT

Laos and Viet-Nam

PARTICIPANTS

The Secretary
Sir David Ormsby Gore, British Ambassador
R.T.D. Ledward, Counselor of British Embassy
Charles T. Cross, Officer in Charge, Laos Affairs

The British Ambassador came at our request to talk with the Secretary about Laos and Viet-Nam.

[Here follows discussion of Laos.]

2. *Viet-Nam.* The Secretary said that we are moving into the next chapter in our efforts to put Diem in position to win his war against the communists. We are planning to give him increased airlift capacity, mostly helicopters, a "Jungle Jim" unit, assistance with photo reconnaissance, some intelligence personnel and advice, additional military advisers so that we may be able to put U.S. advisers down to lower combat echelons, that we will back Diem on his own flood rehabilitation programs with heavy equipment trucks, technical advice, etc. The Secretary pointed out the these moves did not involve sending organized U.S. combat units although it might become necessary to give serious consideration to putting in combat troops depending on the situation some weeks hence.

The moves that we are now planning will bring in U.S. personnel beyond the limits set by the Geneva Accords. We will be prepared to abide by the Accords as soon as the communists do so. The Ambassador asked whether we were intending to make an announcement giving the nature and scope of our assistance. The Secretary replied that we are intending to release the Jorden Report before our moves would come to public attention . . . and we would probably wait until such increases in personnel were being protested openly before making any direct announcement.

The Secretary said that we were also urging Diem to undertake administrative and political reforms designed to improve the efficiency and general acceptability of his government. Diem was still involving himself with too many details and consequently unable to give adequate leadership and direction in major matters.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation: Lot 65 D 330, November 1961. Secret. Drafted by Cross on November 24 and approved in the Office of the Secretary on December 1. The time and location of the meeting are taken from the Rusk Appointment Book in the Johnson Library.

The Ambassador suggested that the Jorden Report would be a big help to the British in their role as co-chairman, and the Secretary said that we would send pre-publication copies to the British as soon as possible.

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244. Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation Between the Secretary of State and the President's Military Representative (Taylor), Washington, November 13, 1961, 3:37 p.m.[1]

The Sec returned the call and T asked if Johnson had mentioned the proposal to have an NSC meeting Wednesday.[2] The Sec answered in the affirmative and asked is it for making decisions or to ratify a refurbished paper. T said it was two-fold—some advisers were not at the Sat mtg[3] particularly Treas and there was question as to whether it should not warrant this mtg and the Sec would have the papers ready to go. The Sec asked how T and J are coming on the papers and T said he and Rostow would see J here at 4.30. The Sec asked how far-reaching and T said not much on the cable but literary comments on the letter.[4] The Sec said he was reluctant to see us delay very much but probably they can't go out until tomorrow. T does not want delay either. The Sec suggested sending them over to Dillon to have him look at them. T said McG. Bundy was preparing a memo for the record[5] and running into difficulty with language and the paper should be checked carefully. His feeling is the Pres does not know what he is approving. Some things are unthought out recommendations and we should tell him this means so and so. The Sec said o.k.—let's do it. He has already told the Br and Fr.[6] NSC will be Wed at 10.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Rusk Files: Lot 72 D 192, Telephone Calls. Transcribed by Phyllis D. Bernau of the Office of the Secretary.

[2] November 15.

[3] See Document 236.

[4] Reference is to instructions to Ambassador Nolting and a letter from President Kennedy to President Diem; see Document 237 and footnote 2 thereto.

[5] See Document 247.

[6] See Document 241 and *supra*.

245. Memorandum From the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Lemnitzer) [1]

Washington, November 13, 1961.

SUBJECT

Command Structure for South Vietnam

In accordance with the discussion at the November 11 meeting with the President, [2] I would appreciate the earliest possible recommendations, together with a draft order, from the Joint Chiefs concerning a command structure for South Vietnam under which a senior US military commander would assume responsibility for all activities, including intelligence operations, related to the counter-insurgency effort. [3] It is understood that such a commander would report directly to the JCS and thence to me for all operational purposes.

The following points should be covered, without excluding others that may appear important to you:

1. The status of the command and its designation.
2. The relationship of the command to CINCPAC, and his functions with respect to it.
3. The relationship of the command to the US Ambassador in Saigon, and to the Chief of the USOM.

In addition to the above, please indicate what organization and key personnel you propose within the Joint Staff to monitor the operation on behalf of the Chiefs and myself. Your plans in this regard should envisage that reports to the President will be necessary on a twice-a-week basis until further notice.

For obvious reasons, I hope that the above can be carried out on the narrowest possible basis of participation. (I will handle the necessary discussions with the State Department after I receive your recommendations). Finally, I should like the personal recommenda-

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Files: FRC 71 A 3470, Southeast Asia 1961.

[2] See Document 236.

[3] Background information on this question is in an 8-page chronology entitled "Notes on Formation of MACV", which traces the origin of a reorganized command to comments made by McNamara at an August 28 staff meeting that the command under CHMAAG should be used as "a laboratory to develop organization & procedures for the conduct of 'sub-limited war.' " (Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 75-062, Misc. Documents 1961)

tion of the Chiefs themselves for the senior officer to assume the command.

Robert S. McNamara [4]

[4] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

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246. Memorandum From the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Lemnitzer) [1]

Washington, November 13, 1961.

SUBJECT

Actions concerning South Vietnam

In advance of our receiving the National Security Action memorandum recording the results of the November 11 meeting with the President, I believe the Joint Chiefs should proceed urgently with the actions stated in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the memorandum tabled at the meeting. [2] In this connection:

a. Paragraph 2 (b) should be understood to embrace actions within South Vietnam as one possibility, with additional actions against North Vietnam and/or Laos envisaged as separate and supplementary possibilities.

b. The desirability and feasibility of moving troops and/or prepositioning equipment in the forward Pacific area should be specifically considered. If this is militarily useful, and would expedite the carrying out of decisions to go ahead with any of the plans developed under paragraph 2, we should be prepared to work out any political factors with State.

c. The actions listed in paragraph 3 should be carried forward with all possible speed. I should like a full report of the states of these measures, the forces, equipment, and costs involved (estimated as well as is now possible), and the schedule of execution. It is understood, of course, that these measures will not be made public, or communicated to officials in South Vietnam, at least until the proposed exchange of letters with Diem has been worked out.

Robert S. McNamara [3]

[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Files: FRC 71 A 3470, Southeast Asia 1961. Top Secret.

[2] Reference is to the memorandum discussed in Document 234.

[3] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

247. Draft National Security Action Memorandum [1]

Washington, November 13, 1961.

TO

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense

SUBJECT

South Viet-Nam

The President today considered a memorandum on the subject of South Viet-Nam, [2] submitted by the Secretary of State for himself and the Secretary of Defense. [3]

1. The President approved the recommendation that the Department of Defense be prepared with plans for the use of United States forces in South Viet-Nam under one or more of the following purposes:

(a) Use of a significant number of United States forces to signify United States determination to defend South Viet-Nam and to boost South Viet-Nam morale.

(b) Use of substantial United States forces to assist in suppressing Viet Cong insurgency short of engaging in detailed counter-guerrilla operations but including relevant operations in North Viet-Nam.

(c) Use of United States forces to deal with the situation if there is organized Communist military intervention.

Planning under (b) should embrace initially actions within South Viet-Nam. Actions that might be taken against North Viet-Nam or guerrilla bases in Laos should be considered separately. In connection with all the plans, the Department of Defense should consider the feasibility of moving troops or equipment in the near future to advanced positions in the Pacific, and submit recommendations concerning such action.

2. The following actions in support of the Government of Viet-Nam will be undertaken immediately, subject to the understanding that these actions would not take effect within South Viet-Nam, be communicated to subordinate Vietnamese officials or made public

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series Top Secret. Attached to the source text is a memorandum of November 13 from Bromley Smith to the National Security Council that reported that the draft NSAM was being circulated for discussion in connection with an NSC meeting scheduled for 10 a.m., November 15.

[2] See Document 234.

[3] For the memorandum from Wheeler to Lemnitzer on implementation of these proposals, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pp. 368–399.

until after the exchange of letters with President Diem contemplated in Paragraph 5 below:

(a) Provide increased air lift to the GVN forces, including helicopters, light aviation, and transport aircraft, manned to the extent necessary by United States uniformed personnel and under United States operational control.

(b) Provide such additional equipment and United States uniformed personnel as may be necessary for air reconnaissance, photography, instruction in and execution of air-ground support techniques, and for special intelligence.

(c) Provide the GVN with small craft, including such United States uniformed advisers and operating personnel as may be necessary for quick and effective operations in effecting surveillance and control over coastal waters and inland waterways.

(d) Provide expedited training and equipping of the civil guard and the self-defense corps with the objective of relieving the regular Army of static missions and freeing it for mobile offensive operations.

(e) Provide such personnel and equipment as may be necessary to improve the military-political intelligence system beginning at the provincial level and extending upward through the Government and the armed forces to the Central Intelligence Organization.

(f) Provide such new terms of reference, reorganization and additional personnel for United States military forces as are required for increased United States participation in the direction and control of GVN military operations and to carry out the other increased responsibilities which accrue to MAAG under these recommendations.

(g) Provide such increased economic aid as may be required to permit the GVN to pursue a vigorous flood relief and rehabilitation program, to supply material in support of the security effort, and to give priority to projects in support of this expanded counter-insurgency program. (This could include increases in military pay, a full supply of a wide range of materials such as food, medical supplies, transportation equipment, communications equipment, and any other items where material help could assist the GVN in winning the war against the Viet Cong.)

(h) Encourage and support (including financial support) a request by the GVN to the FAO or any other appropriate international organization for multilateral assistance in the relief and rehabilitation of the flood area.

(i) Provide individual administrators and advisers for insertion into the Governmental machinery of South Viet-Nam in types and numbers to be agreed upon by the two Governments.

(j) Provide personnel for a joint survey with the GVN of conditions in each of the provinces to assess the social, political, intelligence, and military factors bearing on the prosecution of the counter-insurgency program in order to reach a common estimate of these factors and a common determination of how to deal with them.

3. Ambassador Nolting is to be instructed to make an immediate approach to President Diem to the effect that the Government of the

United States is prepared to join the Government of Viet-Nam in a sharply increased joint effort to cope with the Viet Cong threat and the ravages of the flood as set forth under 2., above, if, on its part, the Government of Viet-Nam is prepared to carry out an effective and total mobilization of its own resources, both material and human, for the same end. Before setting in motion the United States proposals listed above, the United States Government would appreciate confirmation of their acceptability to the GVN, and an expression from the GVN of the undertakings it is prepared to make to insure the success of this joint effort. On the part of the United States, it would be expected that these GVN undertakings would include, in accordance with the detailed recommendations of the Taylor Mission and the Country Team:

(a) Prompt and appropriate legislative and administrative action to put the nation on a wartime footing to mobilize its entire resources. (This would include a decentralization and broadening of the Government so as to realize the full potential of all non-Communist elements in the country willing to contribute to the common struggle.)

(b) The establishment of appropriate Governmental wartime agencies with adequate authority to perform their functions effectively.

(c) Overhaul of the military establishment and command structure so as to create an effective military organization for the prosecution of the war.

4. An exchange of letters between Diem and the President is to be expedited.

(a) Diem's letter would include: reference to the DRV violations of Geneva Accords as set forth in the October 24 GVN letter to the ICC [4] and other documents; pertinent references to GVN statements with respect to its intent to observe the Geneva Accords; reference to its need for flood relief and rehabilitation, reference to previous United States aid and the compliance hitherto by both countries with the Geneva Accords; reference to the USG statement at the time the Geneva Accords were signed; the necessity now of exceeding some provisions of the Accords in view of the DRV violations thereof; the lack of aggressive intent with respect to the DRV; GVN intent to return to strict compliance with the Geneva Accords as soon as the DRV violations ceased; and a request for additional United States assistance in the framework of foregoing policy. The letter should also set forth in appropriate general terms steps Diem has taken and is taking to reform Governmental structure.

(b) The President's reply would be responsive to Diem's request for additional assistance and acknowledge and agree to Diem's statements on the intent promptly to return to strict compliance with the Geneva Accords as soon as DRV violations have ceased.

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[4] Not printed. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-861)

5. The "Jorden Report" is to be printed as a United States "white paper" and distributed to the Governments of all countries with which we have diplomatic relations, including the Communist states, to coincide as nearly as possible with the release of the exchange of letters between the President and Diem and shortly before the arrival in South Viet-Nam of the first increments of U.S. military personnel and equipment described in Paragraph 2, above, which would exceed the Geneva Accord ceilings.

6. The President directed that the following actions be considered for carrying out at the appropriate time in relation to the exchange of letters and other developments:

(a) A private approach to the Soviet Union that would include: our determination to prevent the fall of South Viet-Nam to Communism by whatever means is necessary; our concern over dangers to peace presented by the aggressive DRV policy with respect to South Viet-Nam; our intent to return to full compliance with the Geneva Accords as soon as the DRV does so; the distinction we draw between Laos and South Viet-Nam; and our expectation that the Soviet Union will exercise its influence on the Chicoms and the DRV.

(b) A special diplomatic approach to the United Kingdom in its role as co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference requesting that the United Kingdom seek the support of the Soviet co-Chairman for a cessation of DRV aggression against South Viet-Nam.

(c) A special diplomatic approach to India, both in its role as Chairman of the ICC and as a power having relations with Peiping and Hanoi. This approach should be made immediately prior to public release of the "Jorden Report" and the exchange of letters between Diem and the President.

(d) Special diplomatic approaches to Canada, as well as Burma, Indonesia, Cambodia, Ceylon, the UAR, and Yugoslavia. SEATO, NATO, and OAS members should be informed through those organizations, with selected members also informed individually. The possibility of some special approach to Poland as a member of the ICC should also be considered.

7. The President directed the Departments of State and Defense to develop detailed recommendations for a US command structure in South Viet-Nam that would have a senior US commander assuming responsibility for all phases of US activity, including economic aid, related to the counter-insurgency effort. Such a commander should report directly to the JCS and the Secretary of Defense for operational purposes.

8. The President directed General Taylor and Mr. U. Alexis Johnson, in consultation with the Attorney General, to prepare statements to be used for background purposes pending release of the exchange of letters with Diem and other fuller disclosures of US policy.

248. Letter From Prime Minister Nu to President Kennedy [1]

Rangoon, November 13, 1961.

MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: I am aware that the situation in South Vietnam has been causing you much concern. Needless to say, I share this concern, not only because a threat to the peace is a bad thing wherever it occurs, but because this particular threat happens to be close to my country.

To begin with, let me say that I fully understand the reasons for the concern of the United States with regard to the situation in South Vietnam. Like you, we in Burma desire to see a unified, independent and democratic Vietnam, and until that can be achieved, we wish to see South Vietnam develop as a truly democratic and nationalist entity. Only then can there be any hope of the eventual emergence of a unified, independent and democratic Vietnam.

Recent press reports connected with General Taylor's visit to South Vietnam have referred to the possible despatch of United States forces to South Vietnam. This is probably no more than speculation, but even so, it opens up such dangerous possibilities that I feel it my duty, both as a lover of peace and as a friend of the United States, to say that I would regard such a step as a very grave mistake. In my view, South Vietnamese problems cannot be solved by military means. It can only be solved through measures which will help to bring the Vietnamese masses solidly behind the Diem Government. Besides, introduction of foreign troops into South Vietnam would only worsen the situation, because it would certainly produce similar measures in North Vietnam, leading to a military confrontation between East and West whose consequences no one can foretell. These steps certainly would not conduce to the eventual emergence of a united, independent and democratic Vietnam.

Mr. President, in sharing these thoughts with you, I would like you to know that I have made known to the Government of North Vietnam my grave concern at the persistent reports of North Vietnamese subversive activities in South Vietnam, and have warned them that such activities, if not ended, can only endanger the peace

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-1861. Attached to the source text is a copy of a brief memorandum of transmittal from Battle to Bundy, November 18, indicating that it was the signed original of the Prime Minister's letter. Battle already apparently sent Bundy a copy of telegram 380 from Rangoon, November 14, containing the text of the letter. (*Ibid.*, 751K.00/11-1461) A note on the Department of State's copy of telegram 380 indicates that it was passed to the White House at 11:21 a.m. on November 15.

by inviting new steps by the South Vietnamese Government and its close friends.

I trust that you will not regard this letter as an unwarranted intrusion on my part. As I have said earlier, my sole purpose is to help maintain the peace of the world and promote the future wellbeing of South-East Asia.

With my warm regards and good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Maung Nu

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249. Memorandum From the Deputy Director of the Vietnam Task Force (Wood) to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Steeves) [1]

Washington, November 14, 1961.

SUBJECT

Viet Cong Infiltration: Nature and Extent

1. *Infiltration and Viet Cong Strength.* We do not have good intelligence on VC strength or on the numerical importance of infiltration. It is abundantly clear, however, that infiltration *is* taking place, that it has been accelerated in recent months, and that the VC war could not be long continued without it.

The evidence of VC infiltration available to us has been summarized in the Jorden report. Some of this evidence was placed before the ICC in the recent GVN letter of October 24 regarding the kidnap-murder of Colonel Nam. [2] This evidence includes the statements of interrogated prisoners as well as captured documents and diaries. It reveals that whole units as well as individuals have been infiltrated, and that the infiltration routes include southern Laos, the 17th parallel, and the sea.

Hard core VC strength is now estimated at about 20,000. These are armed and trained forces, about half of which are believed to operate in regular units. This summer, when hard core VC were believed to number 12,000, between five and thirty per cent were

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[1] Source: Department of State, Vietnam Task Force Files: Lot 66 D 193, 1–A2–Briefing Papers GVN 1961. Secret. Drafted by Heavner and sent to Steeves through Anderson.

[2] Not printed (*Ibid.*, Central Files, 751K.00/11–861)

thought to have been infiltrated from the north. In early October, MAAG Saigon reported that 25 to 40 per cent of VC strength is probably composed of infiltrees. Thus, while it is clear that most VC have not been infiltrated from the north, it is also apparent that both the rate of infiltration and the percentage of infiltrees in the VC forces have increased.

Regardless of the relative number of VC infiltrated from the north, it has always been true that this element provides the leadership and the backbone of VC forces. This means of course that infiltration has always been essential to the prosecution of the VC war. It also means that continued acceleration of the VC drive will require increased infiltration as well as increased local recruitment.

Infiltration is relatively more significant in terms of total VC strength in the Plateau area than in the delta. While overall VC forces may now include as little as 25 per cent infiltrees, the VC operating on the plateau adjoining the Lao border are believed to be largely composed of men infiltrated from the north. The most conservative estimate now places the number of VC in that area at 4,000.

Recent intelligence indicates that infiltration directly across the 17th parallel is considerable. While it is probably easier to enter South Viet-Nam via Laos, there is no guarantee that friendly control of the Lao panhandle would seriously handicap the VC unless it was coupled with effective denial of the routes leading directly across the parallel.

2. *VC Potential.* The DRV is known to have more than 300,000 men in its armed forces. Probably the majority are veterans of the long guerrilla war against the French. Many are southerners who came north during the regroupment period following the Geneva Agreements in 1954. These forces obviously provide a very large reservoir of trained guerrilla forces which could be dispatched to South Viet-Nam very quickly. The VC could probably double or even triple their present strength, by infiltration alone, in a very short time. Since it requires about 15 GVN regulars to deal with one guerrilla, it seems clear that the VC can more than meet any increase in GVN forces.

To the VC infiltration potential must be added potential local support. Maximum voluntary supporters are now estimated by the GVN at 200,000; our people are inclined to cut this figure in half. However, much if not most local VC recruitment is accomplished by at least a measure of force or threat. To estimates of voluntary supporters a considerable number of involuntary supporters should probably be added.

250. Memorandum From Robert H. Johnson of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) [1]

Washington, November 14, 1961.

SUBJECT

The Draft National Security Action Memo for South Viet Nam dated November 13, 1961 [2]

I have only a fairly general understanding of the discussion on which the draft action memo is based, but there are certain aspects of the memo which give me some trouble.

I. General

Military Intervention. I fear that we are losing a strategic moment for the introduction of U.S. troop units. The world has been made aware of the crisis in Viet Nam as a result of the Taylor mission. Both the Bloc and the Free World are going to look upon the *actions* we take now as the key to our future actions no matter what we may *say*. A plate glass window on the 17th parallel or a flood relief task force could make a great political difference not only in Viet Nam, but in the whole area. Such intervention later might have much less political effect and may have to be on a much larger scale to have military effect. In any event, in the interim uncertainty as to our intentions will grow.

I am concerned about the relationship between our actions and the diplomatic noises we propose to make. Have we really decided to "prevent the fall of South Viet Nam by whatever means are necessary"? (par. 6 (a)) If not, should we say so to the USSR? I understand that endorsement of a general statement to this effect was explicitly avoided at the meeting on Saturday. [3] I myself think that we ought to *decide* now the key question of whether we are prepared to introduce combat troops if necessary even if we are not going to introduce them now. That is obviously the ultimate test of whether we are prepared to prevent the fall of Viet Nam. Until we have decided it in our own minds, I do not think that we ought to make statements to the USSR that may reflect only hypothetical intentions. Past employment of such statements has depreciated their effect.

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Top Secret. A note on the source text indicates that a copy was also sent to McGeorge Bundy.

[2] Document 247.

[3] Apparently a reference to the meeting described in Document 236.

Finally, if we are really prepared to use troops eventually, shouldn't there be some hint of this in our conversations with Diem (par. 3)? You would have a much better feel for this than I do, but I don't think that some such indication would cause Diem to sit back and turn over responsibility for the ultimate fate of SVN to the U.S. The situation is not analogous to that in Laos where we have had to be very careful about the way we committed ourselves to Phoumi for fear that he would not take negotiations seriously.

What is needed, if we are not going to provide troops, is some equivalent of the bilateral agreement requested by the GVN. Perhaps it could take the form of pointing to our SEATO commitment and stating that we consider this commitment binding without regard to how other SEATO members may vote on intervention. (This was the formula developed for talks with Thanat but never, to my knowledge, used in those talks.)

The Command Concept. The proposal that a senior military commander be put in charge of all U.S. counterinsurgency efforts in Viet Nam is going to create all kinds of problems and I fail to see that it has compensating advantages. Counterinsurgency efforts clearly embrace all activities of any importance. The change would reflect the changed character of our military relationship under the proposed recommendations—our greater operational involvement—but it will downgrade a capable ambassador who has a very good relationship with Diem to the role of a political adviser. It will create new, difficult problems of relationship between the USOM, embassy, USIA and the military. It will also tend to give the effort a wholly military cast which will be undesirable both intrinsically and because of its effect on the attitude of the rest of the world toward the Diem regime.

Why not reorganize the MAAG, give it a new name to reflect its new duties (including operational control of U.S. units) and put a senior general in charge, but leave ultimate responsibility with the ambassador? Or, if some change is absolutely necessary, it might possibly be better to make the ambassador and the military commander co-equal heads of our activities.

If we need to create a theater commander as a dramatic move, would it be better to give him all of SEA as his theater and leave the ambassador in charge in SVN? (Incidentally, if this change does go through as proposed, I assume that a Defense representative will become director of the Washington Task Force.)

II. Other Comments

Par. 1: These three cases seem somewhat vaguely stated, perhaps deliberately so for security reasons. Are we clear as to what is intended by each?

Par. 2 (a) and (c): Who is going to decide how many helicopters, helio-couriers, small craft, etc., are to be provided? There will be a real argument about such specifics unless there is already a clear understanding as to the requirements.

Par. 2 (d): Do we know clearly how we are going to expedite Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps training? The Taylor Report was not specific on this. We have long been aware of the problem; "expediting" isn't going to solve it unless we have a plan.

Pars. 2 (e), (f) and (i): One of the very difficult problems involved in implementing the encadrement concept is going to be to find the necessary intelligence, military and administrative personnel. We will need a special study and crash effort on this problem. Should we rob U.S. activities around the world of French-speaking personnel? Is special incentive pay required to get people into this war area? Would active and reserve military personnel trained in military government be a good source of candidates for administrative cadres?

Par. 2 (g): What is the relationship between existing economic aid and these proposals? For example, are flood requirements going to be covered within the existing commercial import program? Gardiner a week or so ago suggested such an approach to the Vietnamese[4] pointing out that we are committed to make up any trade deficits under the agreed import criteria and that, therefore, if the flood increased total needs we would increase our total aid as that became necessary. The Vietnamese can be depended upon, however, to ask that such aid be clearly additional to the level we have set for the commercial import program. What is the significance of the material in parentheses? Does the President's approval of the action memo constitute approval of our financing of an increase in military pay, etc.?

Par. 2 (h): Are we clear that the FAO can undertake such a relief job? I understand that the organization has never run one. I would think we would want an organization that had considerable past experience—perhaps the International Red Cross though its scope may be too narrow for the job here. If an international approach should not prove feasible, how is the relief job to be organized?

Par. 3: The proposed undertakings by the GVN seem exceedingly general. Wouldn't they need to be spelled out in any communica-

[4] Not further identified.

tion? For just one example, the need to reduce static deployments of the ARVN ought to be covered. (Perhaps the mention of the detailed recommendations of the Taylor Mission and the Country Team is, however, intended to incorporate their proposals by reference.) I am puzzled by the reference in 3 (b) to wartime government agencies. I was not aware that we wanted the GVN to establish any number of new wartime agencies. It is difficult to say in the abstract whether this would be a good idea. It could provide the basis for some decentralization of power and for bringing new people into the government or new people to the top within the government. However, if it is like the last reorganization, it will be mostly facade. Reorganization could also lead to some loss of governmental effectiveness.

RHJ

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251. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President [1]

Washington, November 14, 1961.

SUBJECT

Negotiation about Viet-Nam

1. It is universally agreed that the objective of the proposed exercise in Viet-Nam is to induce the Communists to cease infiltration, return to the Geneva Accord, while assisting South Viet-Nam in reducing the force of some 16,000 guerrillas now operating in the country. This track unquestionably will require extensive talk with the Bloc countries and, at some stage, probably formal negotiations.

2. One crucial question is this: should we enter formal negotiation with the Bloc on this matter before we have taken steps to stabilize and strengthen the military, political, and psychological position on the ground?

3. I submit that it would be unwise and contrary to the lessons of past and current experience to negotiate with the Communists

[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series. Initialed by Rostow.

before we have moved to buy time in Viet-Nam and indicated by deeds that the U.S. is serious about saving South Viet-Nam.

A. As in Laos last Spring, we face a deteriorating situation. If we postpone action to talk, the Communists will do two things: they will extend that talk while continuing to dismantle South Viet-Nam; and (as the British and Desai have indicated) will focus the negotiation on elections. Only a de facto stabilization plus the bargaining position which the potential withdrawal of U.S. forces above the MAAG ceiling would offer appears to make conceivable the notion that they would call off the infiltration guided from Hanoi. It may even require a credible threat to impose military action against North Viet-Nam.

B. If we postpone action in Viet-Nam in order to engage in talk with the Communists, we can count surely on a major crisis of nerve in Viet-Nam and throughout Southeast Asia. The image of U.S. unwillingness to confront Communism—induced by the Laos performance—will be regarded as definitively confirmed. There will be real panic and disarray.

4. In the wake of the Taylor Mission, the moves we now make will be examined on both sides of the Iron Curtain with the greatest care as a measure of this Administration's intentions and determination. It will be very difficult to undo first impressions. If we negotiate now—while infiltration continues—we shall in fact be judged weaker than in Laos; for in that case we at least first insisted on a cease-fire.

5. In advocating this position I have, of course, been mindful of the danger of escalation and war. The question is: does a show of U.S. strength and determination on our side of the post-war truce lines tend to induce war?

6. The Korean War arose from the withdrawal of U.S. force from South Korea and the opening it appeared to offer the Communists.

In other cases where we have acted strongly on our side of the line we have come home free: Northern Iran; Greece; the Berlin blockade; Lebanon-Jordan; Quemoy-Matsu. In Laos, the alerting and loading of the Seventh Fleet induced a cease-fire.

7. In Viet-Nam the gut issue is not whether Diem is or is not a good ruler. That is important in a variety of ways, but he was doing fine from 1956 to 1959, by the standards we apply to other underdeveloped countries. The gut issue is whether we shall continue to accept the systematic infiltration of men from outside and the operation from outside of a guerrilla war against him which has built up from 2,000 to 16,000 effectives in two years. The whole world is asking a simple question: what will the U.S. do about it? If our policy and action is focused sharply on this question, I believe there is a fair chance of avoiding a war. If we act indecisively now, I

fear we shall produce excessive fears on our side and excessive hopes on the other side; and then we shall have to over-react to correct a disintegrating situation worse than the present. In those circumstances there would, indeed, be a danger of war. As in Korea we would have first tempted the enemy by our apparent weakness and then double-crossed him. It is that circumstance I would wish to see us avoid.

Therefore, I suggest that we make the moves we believe required to stabilize the situation and to buy time in South Viet-Nam; and then by imaginative communication and diplomacy—addressed to all elements in the Bloc as well as the Free World—we bring maximum pressure on Hanoi to call off the invasion of South Viet-Nam now under way. Such communication should begin the day we publish the Jorden Report—or the day before.

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252. Memorandum From the President to the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) [1]

Washington, November 14, 1961.

I think we should get our ducks in a row for tomorrow morning's meeting. I believe we should make more precise our requests for action. In the papers which I have seen our requests have been of a general nature.

1. I would like to have you consider the proposals made by Governor Harriman. [2] I am wondering if he should return, perhaps on Friday [3] to discuss the matter further with Pushkin.

2. In the meantime what action should be taken toward South Viet Nam pending the arrival of Harriman.

3. I would like a letter to be written to the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference to call a meeting of the conference to consider immediately South Viet Nam as a breach of the accord. As we will be breaching the Geneva accords ourselves it is important that we lay the groundwork. The Jorden report will do some of this. Has anyone examined the political implications in their efforts.

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series. The source text bears the following handwritten notation by Bundy: "used by President as talking paper Nov. 14 P M—before NSC MGB"

[2] Apparently a reference to Harriman's draft memorandum which he transmitted to the President under cover of a letter of November 12, Document 239.

[3] November 17.

4. Should I address a statement today to Khrushchev concerning South Viet Nam stating how dangerous we thought the situation was.

5. If we are going to send a military man as a Commanding Officer at the four star level for South Viet Nam, perhaps we could name a younger general and give him a star or do you know someone who already has the stars who can handle the situation.

6. I gather you felt that we should have a general military command set up. We want to make sure that someone like George McGhee, heads it, in fact, it might be well to send McGhee.

7. I would like to have someone look into what we did in Greece. How much money and men were involved. How much money was used for guerrilla warfare? Should we have not done it at the company level rather than at the battalion level? It is proposed by the military that we should operate from the battalion level or even before this.

Are we prepared to send in hundreds and hundreds of men and dozens and dozens of ships? If we would just show up with 4 or 5 ships this will not do much good. Or am I misinformed?

I think there should be a group specially trained for guerrilla warfare. I understand that the guns that have been used have been too heavy. Would carbines be better? Wonder if someone could make sure we are moving ahead to improve this. [4]

Perhaps we should issue some sort of a statement on what we propose to do. Our actions should be positive rather than negative. As I said on Saturday [5] concerning Laos—we took actions which made no difference at all. Our actions should be substantial otherwise we will give the wrong impression.

8. We should watch Laos very carefully for any fighting that might break out again even though we decide not to intervene.

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[4] In a memorandum of December 14 to Lemnitzer, the White House Defense Liaison Officer, Major General C.V. Clifton, wrote that he briefed the President regarding the Armalite rifle using a briefing paper prepared by the Department of the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics dated December 5, which was attached. Clifton also reported that the President wanted to be informed of the Joint Chiefs' decision in response to CINCPAC's recommendation that additional Armalite rifles be sent to Vietnam. Clifton informed Lemnitzer:

"I also had the Army bring an M-1 rifle, an M-14 rifle, an Armalite rifle and a carbine to the President. In response to his question, the Army is trying to find out how many of the 1,327,310 unserviceable carbines can be made serviceable. Also the President expressed the opinion that we should be sending as many carbines to South Viet-Nam as they can use because this seems to be a good weapon." (National Defense University, Lemnitzer Papers, Eyes Only Messages In)

[5] Apparently a reference to the meeting described in Document 236.

253. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) to the President [1]

Washington, November 15, 1961.

So many people have offered their opinions on South Vietnam that more may not be helpful. But the other day at the swimming pool you asked me what I thought and here it is.

A. We should now agree to send about one division when needed for military action inside South Vietnam.

1. I believe we should commit *limited* U.S. combat units, if necessary for *military* purposes (not for morale), to help save South Vietnam. A victory here would produce great effects all over the world. A defeat would hurt, but not much more than a loss of South Vietnam with the levels of U.S. help now committed or planned.

2. I believe our willingness to make this commitment, *if necessary*, should be clearly understood, by us and by Diem, before we begin the actions now planned. I think without that decision the whole program will be half-hearted. *With* this decision I believe the odds are almost even that the commitment will not have to be carried out. This conclusion is, I believe, the inner conviction of your Vice President, your Secretaries of State and Defense, and the two heads of your special mission, and that is why I am troubled by your most natural desire to act on other items now, without taking the troop decision. Whatever the reason, this has now become a sort of touchstone of our will.

3. I believe the actions now planned, *plus* the basic decision to put in limited combat troops if necessary, are all that is currently wanted. I would not put in a division for morale purposes. I'd put it in later, to fight if need be. After all, Admiral Felt himself recommended, on balance, against combat troops less than a month ago.[2] It will be time enough to put them in when our new Commander says what he would do with them.

4. The use of force up to a total of 20–25,000, *inside* Vietnam, is not on the same footing as the larger forces that might become necessary if the Vietminh move to direct invasion. I would *not* make the larger decision on a war against North Vietnam today.

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, Sorenson Papers, Vietnam Top Secret.

[2] Reference is to telegram 2004012 from Felt to the JCS, October 20. (Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series)

B. We can manage the political consequences of this line of action.

5. I believe South Vietnam stands, internally and externally, on a footing wholly different from Laos. Laos was never really ours after 1954. South Vietnam is and wants to be. Laotians have fought very little. South Vietnam troops are not U.S. Marines, but they are usable. This makes the opinion problem different at home and abroad.

6. I believe the Jorden Report, the exchange of letters, and Stevenson and Rusk, can coolly justify this basic line of action, not to all the world, but to an effective fraction. I do not expect that these actions will lead to rapid escalation of the conflict, since they remain essentially on our side of the line, and since the Communists do not want that kind of test.

7. I think this solution will put a serious strain on our position in Laos, but that has always been a bad bargain. My advice would be to give the game promptly to Souvanna and hope for the best, meanwhile holding hard to our new course in South Vietnam. Souvanna may make noises against that action, but I don't think he'll fight or be overthrown by the PL for a while.

C. The role of your senior advisers to Diem is crucial.

8. Next only to the basic decision, I put the role of the men to act for you in South Vietnam. I now accept, after some doubts, the Rusk–McNamara view that the man in charge of the war must be a military man. His quality thus becomes decisive, and Nolting should be judged as his complement, not as your head man in South Vietnam. McGarr has been inadequate. All the pressures will be in favor of a solid, virtuous, not quite first-rate senior officer. You need a man chosen with inspiration by you and McNamara personally; his rank can be arranged.

9. In addition to his personal qualities, this senior man will need the full confidence and support of Diem. No one action can guarantee this relation, but our present efforts with Diem should be directed toward strengthening the role of the U.S. military commander in every possible way. How this should be done is a matter of tactics—but it should not be left to faith, hope and charity.

D. In Summary: two changes are needed in the cable to Nolting. [3]

10. If you accept this argument, the cable to Nolting should include:

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[3] Apparently a reference to a draft version of telegram 619 to Saigon, November 15; see footnote 2, Document 257.

(1) a statement that U.S. combat troops will be put into South Vietnam when and if the U.S. military recommend it on persuasive military grounds for internal action.

(2) a much clearer statement that Diem must take U.S. military counsel on a wholly new basis.

MGB

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254. Notes on the National Security Council Meeting, Washington, November 15, 1961, 10 a.m. [1]

[Here follows a brief discussion of other matters.] A brief outline of the size and disposition of Chinese armed forces was given. The President then asked what routes of movement are available for these troops from China to North Viet Nam. Mr. Amory pointed out and described the condition of railway and roads of access and cited the generally inadequate aspects of these avenues. Mr. Dulles cautioned that it should not be assumed that the Chinese setbacks as well as the ideological rift were such that the Soviets and Chinese would not be able nor willing to engage jointly any nation which threatened Communist interests.

Mr. Rusk explained the Draft of Memorandum on South Viet Nam. [2] He added the hope that, in spite of the magnitude of the proposal, any U.S. actions would not be hampered by lack of funds nor failure to pursue the program vigorously. The President expressed the fear of becoming involved simultaneously on two fronts on opposite sides of the world. He questioned the wisdom of involvement in Viet Nam since the basis thereof is not completely clear. By comparison he noted that Korea was a case of clear aggression which was opposed by the United States and other members of the U.N. The conflict in Viet Nam is more obscure and

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[1] Source: Johnson Library, Vice Presidential Security File, National Security Council (II). Top Secret. The drafter is not indicated, but it was probably Howard L. Burris, the Vice President's military aide. According to the President's log, the following people, in addition to the President, attended the meeting: Byron R. White, Acting Attorney General, David E. Bell, Allen W. Dulles, John A. McCone, Robert S. McNamara, Roswell L. Gilpatric, Paul Nitze, William P. Bundy, Lyman L. Lemnitzer, Edward A. McDermott, Dean Rusk, Fowler Hamilton, U. Alexis Johnson, George C. McGhee, Walter P. McConaughy, Henry H. Fowler, Edward R. Murrow, McGeorge Bundy, Walt R. Rostow, Maxwell Taylor, Chester V. Clifton, Theodore C. Sorenson, Howard L. Burris, and Bromley Smith. (Kennedy Library, JFK Log, Book II) From the notes themselves it is evident that Robert Amory was also present.

[2] Document 247.

less flagrant. The President then expressed his strong feeling that in such a situation the United States needs even more the support of allies in such an endeavor as Viet Nam in order to avoid sharp domestic partisan criticism as well as strong objections from other nations of the world. The President said that he could even make a rather strong case against intervening in an area 10,000 miles away against 16,000 guerrillas with a native army of 200,000, where millions have been spent for years with no success. The President repeated his apprehension concerning support, adding that none could be expected from the French, and Mr. Rusk interrupted to say that the British were tending more and more to take the French point of view. The President compared the obscurity of the issues in Viet Nam to the clarity of the positions in Berlin, the contrast of which could even make leading Democrats wary of proposed activities in the Far East.

Mr. Rusk suggested that firmness in Viet Nam in the manner and form of that in Berlin might achieve desired results in Viet Nam without resort to combat. The President disagreed with the suggestion on the basis that the issue was clearly defined in Berlin and opposing forces identified whereas in Viet Nam the issue is vague and action is by guerrillas, sometimes in a phantom-like fashion. Mr. McNamara expressed an opinion that action would become clear if U.S. forces were involved since this power would be applied against sources of Viet Cong power including those in North Viet Nam. The President observed that it was not clear to him just where these U.S. forces would base their operations other than from aircraft carriers which seemed to him to be quite vulnerable. General Lemnitzer confirmed that carriers would be involved to a considerable degree and stated that Taiwan and the Philippines would also become principal bases of action.

With regard to sources of power in North Viet Nam, Mr. Rusk cited Hanoi as the most important center in North Viet Nam and it would be hit. However, he considered it more a political target than a military one and under these circumstances such an attack would "raise serious questions." He expressed the hope that any plan of action in North Viet Nam would strike first of all any Viet Cong airlift into South Viet Nam in order to avoid the establishment of a procedure of supply similar to that which the Soviets have conducted for so long with impunity in Laos.

Mr. Bundy raised the question as to whether or not U.S. action in Viet Nam would not render the Laotian settlement more difficult. Mr. Rusk said that it would to a certain degree but qualified his statement with the caveat that the difficulties could be controlled somewhat by the manner in which actions in Viet Nam are initiated.

The President returned the discussion to the point of what will be done next in Viet Nam rather than whether or not the U.S. would become involved. He cautioned that the technique of U.S. actions should not have the effect of unilaterally violating Geneva accords. He felt that a technique and timing must be devised which will place the onus of breaking the accords on the other side and require them to defend their actions. Even so, he realized that it would take some time to achieve this condition and even more to build up world opinion against Viet Cong. He felt that the Jorden Report might be utilized in this effort.

The President discussed tactics in dealing with the International Control Commission. He delineated a clever plan to charge North Viet Nam with the onus for breaking accords. Following this he envisioned the initiation of certain U.S. actions. He realized that these actions would be criticized and subject to justification in world opinion but felt that it would be much less difficult if this particular U.S. action were secondary rather than primary. He directed State to study possible courses of action with consideration for his views relating to timing and to the Geneva Accords. He asked State also to consider the position of the individual members of the ICC and further suggested that the time was appropriate to induce India to agree to follow U.S. suggestion.

Mr. Murrow reported that parts of the Jorden Report are already in the hands of the ICC. He questioned the value of utilizing the report in the suggested manner since to do so would simply be to place a U.S. stamp on the report. Such action might not reap the desired effects.

The President asked what nations would possibly support the U.S. intervention in Viet Nam, listing Pakistan, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand (?). Mr. Rusk replied that they all would but the President implied doubts because of the pitfalls of the particular type of war in Viet Nam. He described it as being more a political issue, of different magnitude and (again) less defined than the Korean War.

Mr. Fowler said that the studies suggested to him that the job to be done has been magnified, thereby leading to pessimistic conclusions as to outcome. Taylor responded that although the discussion and even some of the draft memoranda were somewhat pessimistic, he returned from Viet Nam with optimism over what could be done if certain clearcut actions were taken. He envisioned two phases: (1) the revival of Viet Nam morale and (2) the initiation of the guerrilla suppression program. Mr. McNamara cautioned that the program was in fact complex and that in all probability U.S. troops, planes and resources would have to be supplied in additional quantities at a later date.

The President asked the Secretary of Defense if he would take action if SEATO did not exist and McNamara replied in the affirmative. The President asked for justification and Lemnitzer replied that the world would be divided in the area of Southeast Asia on the sea, in the air and in communications. He said that Communist conquest would deal a severe blow to freedom and extend Communism to a great portion of the world. The President asked how he could justify the proposed courses of action in Viet Nam while at the same time ignoring Cuba. General Lemnitzer hastened to add that the JCS feel that even at this point the United States should go into Cuba.

The President stated the time had come for neutral nations as well as others to be in support of U.S. policy *publicly*. He felt that we should aggressively determine which nations are in support of U.S. policy and that these nations should identify themselves. The President again expressed apprehension on support of the proposed action by the Congress as well as by the American people. He felt that the next two or three weeks should be utilized in making the determination as to whether or not the proposed program for Viet Nam could be supported. His impression was that even the Democratic side of Congress was not fully convinced. The President stated that he would like to have the Vice President's views in this regard and at that point asked if there was information on the Vice President's arrival.[3] The President then stated that no action would be taken during the meeting on the proposed memorandum and that he would discuss these subjects with the Vice President. He asked State to report to him when the directed studies had been completed.

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[3] In a memorandum of November 15 to the Vice President, Colonel Burris described the hasty manner in which the November 15 meeting had been scheduled and how he had been unable to notify the Vice President prior to his departure from Washington on November 14 for Detroit. Just before the opening of the meeting, Burris told McGeorge Bundy that the only flight Johnson could get back from Detroit did not arrive until just after 11 a.m. but that he was not aware of the Vice President's plans. Burris then described the course of the meeting.

"The meeting proceeded in the normal fashion with the first hour being consumed by the presentation of reports. Discussion continued until about 11:30, at which time the President asked me if I had further information on your arrival and, when I replied in the negative, he asked if I would check. I went outside the meeting and called Walter [Jenkins] and discovered that you had informed him around midnight of your difficulty in returning to Washington last night by private plane because of weather and of the possibility that you might not return to Washington as scheduled but might proceed to Seattle. I returned to the meeting and informed the President that I could not ascertain the details of your flight and arrival at the moment. The President then suggested that the meeting be adjourned and that he would discuss the subject with you later." (Johnson Library, Vice Presidential Security File, National Security Council (II))

No record was found of a subsequent meeting between the President and Vice President regarding Vietnam.

255. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, November 15, 1961—7 p.m.

656. During course Trueheart's courtesy call today, British Ambassador Hohler read to him November 14 message from British Embassy Washington, summarizing decisions on Taylor recommendations as received from Department. Telegram gave much more detailed rundown on decisions than apparently communicated to Alphand (Deptel 600 [2]), and indicates that all points which were under consideration by General Taylor when he was here have been adopted with the very major exception of flood relief task force. British also informed that Jungle Jim units are part of Taylor package.

You can imagine that Vietnamese and Task Force Saigon have been awaiting results of President's decision anxiously and impatiently. It is naturally embarrassing and discouraging to have these results conveyed to us first by British. But what is more serious is that there is little or no doubt that British and French here will find a way to let Vietnamese know that they are ahead of us and I would not at all rule out that they will pass along immediately to Vietnamese what they know of contents of decisions. [3]

Nolting

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-1561. Secret; Priority; Eyes Only. Received in the Department of State at 10:29 a.m.

[2] Telegram 600, November 13 (*ibid.*, 751K.00/11-1361), summarized the conversation between Rusk and Alphand described in Document 241.

[3] At a meeting at the Department of State between 3 and 4 p.m., November 15, at which Vietnam was one of a number of subjects raised, Rusk told Ambassador Alphand and Lord Hood of the British Embassy that the Department of State had not yet sent any instructions to the Embassy in Saigon, although British and French representatives in Saigon had given Nolting the impression that decisions had already been reached in Washington. Rusk said that he wanted to make clear that previous discussions with British and French representatives in Washington "had been an exchange of thoughts but we had not given specific instructions." Alphand expressed his certainty that "nothing had been said to the press or to the Vietnamese authorities." (Memorandum of a conversation at the Department of State, November 15, Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-1561)

256. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) to the President [1]

Washington, November 15, 1961.

NOTES FOR TALK WITH SECRETARY RUSK—NOV. 15 [2]

A. Vietnam

1. The problem of management in Washington

I've told the Secretary frankly that you feel the need to have someone on this job that is wholly responsive to your policy, and that you really do not get that sense from most of us. I suggested Averell. He said Averell was needed in Geneva and that Alexis would loyally carry out any policy you directed. I don't think this is the same as having your own man—Alexis isn't that dispassionate—or that much of an executive. Averell is your man, as Assistant Secretary.

2. The problem of management in Saigon

The Secretary thinks Nolting is good and has Diem's confidence. He wants to keep him there. I expressed my uncertainty. He persists. On military leadership he agrees strongly that no routine four-star general will do. I would still consider McGhee (for one thing, if he thinks it won't work after a good look, he'll tell you, and he has the authority of the victor of Greece).

3. The problem of allied support

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series. Top Secret.

[2] In a memorandum of November 15, entitled "Points for discussion with Secretary Rusk, November 15, 2.30 p.m.," McGeorge Bundy listed the following areas in which he understood "the President has concern about our South Vietnam operations: (1) command and control in Washington, (2) command and control in South Vietnam, (3) coordination with the Allies, and (4) the prospects of limiting the other side's activity." He also listed the following specific questions raised by the President:

"1. Should we not float the Jorden report at once?

"2. Why did Diem put his brother in charge of the flood relief task force, and is this not a bad sign?

"3. Do we really think the ICC can do very much in South Vietnam?

"4. Why was he told that U Nu wants to see us act when U Nu has just warned him privately against sending troops?" (*Ibid.*)

Bundy met with the Secretary of State at 2:30 p.m. that day. (Johnson Library, Rusk Appointment Books) Although the memorandum printed here is entitled "Notes for Talk with Secretary Rusk," it apparently is a record of what was actually said at that meeting.

Bundy had called Rusk at 1:05 p.m. that day, the following conversation was held:

"Mr. B. said the Pres. is still thinking hard and has spoken to Harriman and Taylor and now thinks it would be a great help if he and the Secretary could have a talk on the next steps to be taken. Mr. B. will come over at 2:30 to fill the Sec. in on a few things and Sec. will come to WH at 4:15 p.m." (Department of State, Rusk Files: Lot 72 D 192, Telephone Calls)

You want to get as much backing as possible from Allies. I think this means a strong line with British, an appeal for Australian help, and pressure via Galbraith on Indians. (Galbraith assured me he would put all the heat you wanted on Indians and thought he could do anything in reason, short of bringing Indian troops into Saigon for combat.) I think Secretary will respond well on this, subject to point 5 below.

4. The problem of enemy reactions

I asked Secretary if he thought action now recommended would be enough if enemy stepped up infiltration. He thought more might be needed, but *within* SVN. He is against bombing Hanoi as a response to guerrilla infiltration. He believes we should do enough to put the result up to Diem.

5. The problem of U.S. clarity of purpose

Secretary thinks the good of our actions depends on belief we mean to hold in Southeast Asia. He knows we may lose, and he knows we want no Korea, but he thinks we *must* try to hold and must show determination to all concerned. He suggests you should let this be a Rusk–McNamara Plan and fire all concerned if it doesn't work. He thinks we *must* meet Khrushchev in Vietnam or take a terrible defeat. I attach cables showing what Mr. Rusk told Alphand & Ormsby Gore.[3] This shows the tone he thinks we must take, and it is obviously important that you either approve or disapprove.

6. Specific questions

I have alerted the Secretary and Alexis Johnson to your questions on several specific points and he hopes to have comments:

1. What does U Nu really think and want, in light of his cable?[4]
2. Is it a good sign that Diem put his brother in charge of flood relief?
3. Shouldn't we float the Jorden report as soon as possible? (Alexis says it will take ten days, at least, to print—I wonder).
4. What can ICC really be expected to do?

B. Department Organization

If Averell, or any other strong man, is to take McConaughy's place, it should be in the context of a general game of musical chairs, something like this:

Ball for Bowles
Bowles for Harriman
Harriman for McConaughy

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[3] Neither found attached, but reference is to the conversations described in Documents 241 and 243

[4] Document 248

McConaughy for the Philippines
McGhee for Nolting(?)
Rostow for McGhee(?)
Goodwin for Coerr
Achilles or Coerr for Morrison (OAS)
Morrison for a Commission
Dutton for Hays
Hays for a quiet Embassy
Hamilton for Ball

Secretary won't do this till you tell him to. [5]

McG.B. [6]

[5] Regarding the organizational changes that took place within the Department of State later in the month, see Document 281.

[6] Printed from a copy that bears these typed initials.

257. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, November 15, 1961—9:02 p.m.

620. Following is draft letter from President Diem to President Kennedy which should be handled accordance instructions contained Deptel 619. [2]

"Dear Mr. President:

1. Since its birth, more than six years ago, the Republic of Viet-Nam has enjoyed the close friendship and cooperation of the United States of America. On our mutual concern for the future of the Vietnamese people, on our mutual determination to defend the frontiers of the Free World against Communist aggression, and on our mutual dedication to the ideal of human dignity, we have founded an international partnership which I believe is of great and lasting value not only to our two peoples but to all free men. Together, we have built a bridge of understanding and friendship between an Asian people and a Western people, setting an example for all who believe that great historical and cultural differences need not separate men of goodwill. Together we have laid the material foundations of a new and modern Viet-Nam in which my people can realize their aspirations. Together, we have checked the thrust of Communist tyranny in Southeast Asia. These are great accomplishments and our two peoples can be rightly proud of them.

2. Like the United States, the Republic of Viet-Nam has always been devoted to the preservation of peace. My people know only too well the sorrows of war. We did not sign the 1954 Geneva Agreements because we could never consent to the partition of our country and the enslavement of more than half of our people by Communist tyranny. But we have never considered the reunification of our nation by force. On the contrary, we have publicly pledged that we will not violate the demarcation line and the demilitarized zone set up by the Agreements. We have always been prepared and

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-1561. Secret; Niact. Drafted by Cottrell and Heavner on November 14 and cleared with McConaughy, U. Alexis Johnson, Rusk, and the President.

[2] For text, see *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pp. 600–605. It instructed Nolting to meet with Diem and inform him of President Kennedy's decision to join the Republic of Vietnam in a joint effort "to contain and eliminate the threat to its independence."

Telegram 618 to Saigon, November 13, summarized for Nolting the results of the U.S. Government's decisions on the Taylor Report; see *Declassified Documents, 1976*, p. 132C. It stated that the United States did not intend to introduce combat troops into Vietnam now.

have on many occasions stated our willingness to reunify Viet-Nam on the basis of democratic and truly free elections.

3. The record of the Communist authorities in the northern part of our country is quite otherwise. They not only consented to the division of Viet-Nam, but were eager for it. They pledged themselves to observe the Geneva Agreements and during the seven years since have never ceased to violate them. They call for free elections but are ignorant of the very meaning of the words. They talk of "peaceful reunification" and wage war against us.

4. From the beginning, the Communists resorted to terror in their efforts to subvert our people, destroy our government, and impose a Communist regime upon us. They have attacked defenseless teachers, closed schools, killed members of our anti-malarial program and looted hospitals. This is coldly calculated to destroy our Government's humanitarian efforts to serve our people.

5. We have long sought to check the Communist attack from the north on our people by appeals to the International Control Commission. Over the years, we have repeatedly published to the world the evidence of the Communist plot to overthrow our Government and seize control of all of Viet-Nam by illegal intrusions from outside our country. The evidence has mounted until now it is hardly necessary to rehearse it. Most recently, the kidnapping and brutal murder of our chief liaison officer to the International Control Commission, Colonel Hoang Thuy Nam, compelled us to speak out once more. In our October 24, 1961, letter to the ICC,[3] we called attention again to the publicly stated determination of the Communist authorities in Hanoi to "liberate the South" by the overthrow of my Government and the imposition of a Communist regime on our people. We cited the proof of massive infiltration of Communist agents and military elements into our country. We outlined the Communist strategy, which is simply the ruthless use of terror against the whole population, women and children included.

6. In the course of the last few months, the Communist assault on my people has achieved a new ferocity. In October, they caused more than 1,800 incidents of violence and more than 2,000 casualties. They have struck occasionally in battalion strength, and they are continually augmenting their forces by infiltration from the north. The level of their attacks is already such that our forces are stretched to the utmost. We are forced to defend every village, every hamlet, indeed every home against a foe whose tactic is always to strike at the defenseless.

7. A disastrous flood was recently added to the misfortunes of the Vietnamese people. The greater part of three provinces was

[3] Not printed. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-861)

inundated, with a great loss of property. We are now engaged in a nation-wide effort to reconstruct and rehabilitate this area. The Communists are, of course, making this task doubly difficult, for they have seized upon the disruption of normal administration and communications as an opportunity to sow more destruction in the stricken areas.

8. In short, the Vietnamese nation now faces what is perhaps the gravest crisis in its long history. For more than 2,000 years, my people have lived and built, fought and died in this land. We have not always been free. Indeed, much of our history and many of its proudest moments have arisen from conquest by foreign powers and our struggle against great odds to regain or defend our precious independence. But it is not only our freedom which is at stake today, it is our national identity. For, if we lose this war, our people will be swallowed by the Communist Bloc, all our proud heritage will be blotted out by the 'socialist society,' and Viet-Nam will leave the pages of history. We will lose our national soul.

9. Mr. President, my people and I are mindful of the great assistance which the United States has given us. Your help has not been lightly received, for the Vietnamese are a proud people, and we are determined to do our part in the defense of the Free World. It is clear to all of us that the defeat of the Viet Cong demands the total mobilization of our Government and our people, and you may be sure that we will devote all of our resources of money, minds, and men to this great task.

10. But Viet-Nam is not a great power, and the forces of International Communism now arrayed against us are more than we can meet with the resources at hand. We must have further assistance from the United States if we are to survive the war now being waged against us.

11. If our request for aid needs any further justification before the court of world opinion, we need only refer to the Charter of the United Nations which recognizes the right of self-defense for all nations. We can certainly assure mankind that our action is purely defensive. Much as we regret the subjugation of more than half our people in North Viet-Nam, we have no intention, and indeed no means, to free them by the use of force.

12. I have said that Viet-Nam is at war. War means many things, but most of all it means the death of brave people for a cause they believe in. Viet-Nam has suffered many wars, and through the centuries, we have always had patriots and heroes who were willing to shed their blood for Viet-Nam. We will keep faith with them. When Communism has long ebbed away into the past, my people will still be here, a free united nation growing from the deep roots of our Vietnamese heritage. They will remember your

help in our time of need. This struggle will then be a part of our common history. And your help, your friendship, and the strong bonds between our two peoples will be a part of Viet-Nam, then as now."

Rusk

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258. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, November 16, 1961—2 p.m.

661. Task Force VN. Embtel 545 [2] reported decline in public morale which occurred late October with attendant increased dissatisfaction with GVN on part civil and military officials.

Since then situation seems to have stabilized somewhat in that morale has not noticeably deteriorated further. Prices Saigon remain high (no. 1 rice was 11 piasters per kilo Nov 14), but slight decline certain commodities has taken place. There remains, however, much jitteriness, and population could easily be thrown into state of near panic by VC terrorism in or military [garble] near Saigon.

We believe present situation is anticipatory lull pending hoped-for dramatic results of Taylor Mission. In past few days there have been press stories inquiring when evidence of increased US support can be expected and continuing express hope either directly or indirectly US forces in some form will be sent to Viet-Nam. Conversations with Assembly Deputies, Government officials and private citizens also indicate some uneasiness at absence to date of visible aftermath Taylor visit. In this atmosphere it evident dramatic moves by US would give immediate boost to morale, whereas absence such moves would further depress spirits.

On political front criticism of government and Diem is growing, especially by people in or close to GVN. Vice President and Can Lao financial advisor most recent and most striking examples we can cite in this connection. Criticism also appears more open in that there less attempt than before to conceal personal views and even usually strictly controlled newspapers carry occasional barbs against govern-

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-1661. Secret. Repeated to Phnom Penh, Vientiane, Geneva for FECON, Bangkok, Paris, London, CINCPAC for PolAd, Manila, Tokyo, and Hue.

[2] Document 193.

ment methods. Perhaps this reason two papers had articles censored Nov 10.

At same time, pattern of possible reformist action beginning to develop openly. Principal goal of extremely moderate group behind this action seems to be creation some sort of supreme war council which, though under President, would exercise much of his present authority and take over many fields of activity he now personally directs. Idea has now been publicly floated in press, has received favorable cross-play and is very much alive.

While advocacy of reforms continues, CAS reports indicate coup plotting per se in abeyance pending results of Taylor Mission and GVN response to them.

Thus while situation here momentarily stable psychologically, it still highly volatile pending hoped-for US-inspired new phase in anti-VC war.

Nolting

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259. Memorandum From the Director of Intelligence and Research (Hilsman) to the Secretary of State [1]

Washington, November 16, 1961. [2]

SUBJECT

General Taylor's Recommendations on South Vietnam

In the next week or ten days INR will complete a four-month study of the political and foreign policy implications of the new Communist tactics of guerilla warfare and subversion.[3] Done with the help of an outside consultant [4] who spent three months working

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Presidential Status Reports. Top Secret. No drafting or clearance information is given on the source text, which is attached to a brief covering memorandum from Hilsman to McGeorge Bundy, dated November 16, which reads:

"Alex has passed the attached to Max Taylor and Walt Rostow. The main study and a summary of lessons and findings should be ready by Monday [November 20]."

[2] This is the date of transmittal to McGeorge Bundy. Although there is no date on the source text, statements in the second paragraph suggest that the paper was drafted before November 15 when a decision was reached on Taylor's recommendations.

[3] The completed study has not been found.

[4] Not identified.

full time with people in INR, this study is a comprehensive one and it has produced some significant findings.

Unfortunately the completed INR study will not be available in time for these findings to be considered in the decision on General Taylor's recommendations, which I understand will be made this coming week. In this memorandum, however, I have tried to select from the study those considerations that seem most immediately relevant to the Vietnam decision.

In general, the INR study indicates that the most effective way of meeting a guerilla threat like that of the Viet Cong is not with regular troops, but rather by a sophisticated combination of civic action, intelligence, police work, and constabulary-like counter-guerilla forces that use a tactical doctrine quite different from the traditional doctrine of regular forces.

The findings of the INR study would support the recommendations you have just made to the President in your memorandum of November 11th.[1] These findings would, however, indicate the desirability of certain additional measures as well. A hasty and incomplete catalogue of these additional measures follows.

1. *Police* There is a great need for, and potential use of, police forces in South Vietnam. A rapid buildup of these security forces would supplement, not duplicate, the work of MAAG and ARVN. In certain situations such a buildup would facilitate the military preparedness program.

Police training can immediately be augmented in two vital categories—communications and specialized constabulary-enforcement efforts. The communications field has already benefited from efforts to establish village alarm systems and joint security communication systems. This channel of training and operations should be preserved and broadened.

Vietnam sorely needs a rural police service—with local personnel stationed in their own provinces, a highway patrol, stronger urban and prefectural police networks than presently exist, and additional river and harbor companies. At present sûreté municipal, and prefectural police total 22,000. These forces need further training in police intelligence work and in matters related to detection of subversion. Their numbers must be augmented by at least 10,000 if they are to perform all the necessary functions noted above. This increment can come from the Civil Guard which numbers 64,000, but only 32,000 are to be trained by MAAG within the next year or so.

In certain matters MAAG is moving ahead—as in the 17 Boat Platoon program. But it is likely that the required ICA estimate of

[1] Reference is to the memorandum discussed in Document 234.

ten river and harbor companies is not only essential but can still be considered a valid program in light of the difficulties in patrol encountered by the VNN. In any event if AID personnel are available, for training purposes at the very least, they could be added to the MAAG group to expedite and broaden the program.

Police can play a vital role in rural and highway work. By remaining in their own provinces, they can keep up good contacts with the local inhabitants, build confidence, and so serve as a vital source of intelligence regarding guerilla LOC and locations. This type of approach has proved particularly effective in Burma and Indonesia.

Moreover such an effort could also have useful effects on the South Vietnam political scene. It would give a rational and valid base to Diem's policy of bolstering his Provincial Chiefs. Since this policy is based in part on a fear of the military and the concentration of power in its hands, the development of a separate security force with a legitimate purpose, spread over the countryside and under the control of his political allies, might diminish Diem's hostility to the military and make him more amenable to accepting our reform recommendations in that sphere of activity. The fact that the Provincial Chiefs will not now permit the Civil Guard to be transferred out of their provinces illustrates the current tension between the government and the army. So does the Chiefs' reluctance to permit ARVN inspection of the Civil Guard. An expansion of essential police functions, including the transfer of untrained Civil Guard personnel to the police field, might improve the training program as well as facilitate the integration of the rest of the force into the major military effort.

2. *Parallel U.S. Organization* The Taylor Report * places great stress on U.S. participation at the working levels of the Vietnamese armed forces, not only in plans, operations, intelligence, and communications, but also in the areas of logistics, supply, and morale. An effort to increase morale and effectiveness through an immediate improvement in the general welfare of the enlisted man (diet, pay, promotion, leaves, awards) requires close and continual attention. For this effort to succeed, the entire apparatus of the Vietnamese forces, and not simply the combat arm, must have American participation that will be both acceptable and effective.

A possible solution which should be considered is the creation of a parallel U.S. chain of command running alongside the indigenous forces and ranging from corps level down to the smallest administrative units. Their purview could include supervision of training exercises as well as the items noted above.

* Document 210

Such supervision would be of particular importance in the rapid enlargement of company grade and non-commissioned officer cadres. It is essential that the U.S. officers *not* exercise command in these activities, but that they and their Vietnamese counterparts *do* have the authority to make reports and appeal matters through their own chains of command to the next highest echelon in both national organizations. In this way, an American official could report to his own and to Vietnamese superiors any failure to follow what he considers to be reasonable and sound advice. At the minimum, such a liaison system would serve as an instrument of intelligence and surveillance on the quality of work done by the armed forces in effecting reform programs, the level of morale of the enlisted personnel, and the degree of efficiency obtained as a consequence of the training program.

The possibility of providing sanctions through such a system might also be investigated. That is, Vietnamese officers who failed to carry out their tasks could lose their posts or promotions, and if necessary, U.S. supplies could be made conditional on the maintenance of proper personnel policy.

3. *Counter-guerilla Operations and Leadership* The Taylor Report notes that each additional guerilla requires fifteen more government soldiers to engage in this kind of warfare. Hence as the Viet Cong force reaches a critical size, it outstrips the GVN's ability to match forces at the 15:1 ratio. With the regulars at 170,000, the Civil Guard at 64,000 and the self defense force at 53,000, the total reaches 282,000 (or 317,000 if the regulars are augmented.) But the Viet Cong is growing rapidly, and is now estimated at 16,000. Should it continue to increase at the present rate, it will easily rise above the accepted ratio, especially if we take into account the number of ineffectives in the military forces that already swell the government-force totals.

As a consequence, the burden on the quality of the government's combat forces is enormous. An all-out effort in training, tactical conception, leadership and morale are vital if the situation is to be kept under control. In numerical terms, it is essential to bring the effective combat ratio down as close to 10:1 as possible.

Radical innovation in the organization, doctrine, equipment and tactical deployment of counter-guerilla forces is a primary requirement in Vietnam. The Taylor Report notes this major issue and is quick to analyze the political difficulties involved in the proper deployment even of those troops that have had special training.

These difficulties must be overcome or the entire project will remain out of control. Therefore we need to stress the separation of the Vietnamese equivalent of Special Forces from the regular army. Since Diem is bound to resist the overall military reorganization which the Taylor Report advocates, it may be wise to start with this

category and try to wring from him this specific concession. In this way, the vital issue of losing control over his whole army will not be at stake, and the comfort he draws from this might make him more amenable.

In such circumstances, it is essential that we determine what percentage of the armed forces of GVN we wish to treat in this category. Under present conditions, we should be influenced by considerations of Diem's position, the size of such forces trained and immediately trainable, and the short and medium range military requirements. The nature and structure of this command, and its relationship to the rest of the regular army and to the chain of command, must also be worked out carefully.

Though experts differ in several important details, there is a considerable body of agreement on what constitutes a proper counter-guerilla effort. The basic unit is a small formation roughly around 50[7] men in size. This force must be able to fan out into the countryside, be self-reliant, and be able to operate autonomously. It must live in the jungle and be prepared to employ guerilla techniques against guerillas. In the interest of mobility, its arms must be light, its transport facilities rudimentary yet efficient, and its communications equipment both simple and open. Though it must operate apart from other units and at times deploy itself in decentralized patrols, it must be able to regroup into large formations when needed. The ability to disperse and regroup rapidly, much as guerillas themselves do, is absolutely essential.

Leadership is a vital component for these units require brave determined professionals. The leader must be able to study the terrain, maintain good relations with the indigenous farming population, keep up the morale of his men while behind enemy lines or in a no-man's jungle, and at the same time be able to plan ahead and extemporize as a situation develops.

Vietnam may be unable to supply leaders of this type immediately, in the number and quality required. Consequently, the use of U.S. or SEATO personnel for the critical jobs of forming and leading such groups and training indigenous leaders in Vietnam or abroad may afford results beyond the proportion first apparent from the numbers and costs involved. American experts, Philippine veterans of the Huk campaign, and successful field officers from Malaya are all specially qualified for such a role.

4. *Military Tactics and Political Support* In conjunction with any investigation at the "provincial grass roots" of the social, political and other factors bearing on the counter-insurgency problem, we

[7] The number "15" is crossed out in the source text and "50" is written in the margin

must repeatedly stress to the GVN the importance of minimizing damage to the civilian community in the course of military operations. Indeed a prime objective of special-force operations should be to recognize that the struggle goes on within friendly, or potentially friendly, territory, even though the enemy is at hand and may have voluntary or involuntary assistance from the inhabitants of a particular region.

A primary requirement is a force disciplined to respect civilian rights and property. Soldiers must not seize food. They must take as little as possible and pay for all requisitions. They must avoid undue damage to property (especially crops and livestock). They must treat the local inhabitants with respect. Often how common courtesies are extended is as significant as the intent. A friendly attitude establishes proper rapport with the citizenry, maintains the government's prestige, and often induces the people to talk to the soldiers and give them valuable information. Discipline and proper behavior are especially important when units engage in autonomous operations free from central control, such as wide-ranging patrols. A combination of an ineffective sweep and harsh behavior during its operation ruins a regime's prestige and diminishes its intelligence contacts with the people, without which the patrols themselves are of no value.

The GVN is all too prone to take repressive measures. Tactically, the operating units on patrol tend to gain the impression that they are in enemy territory and they act accordingly. Or, on occasion, the government has bombed inhabited areas in the central mountains because the ethnic minorities there have helped sustain Viet Cong forces. Yet this does not stop those who volunteer such help and seriously antagonizes others. Saturation of Viet Cong areas with anti-personnel chemicals is also politically hazardous, since few entire areas are actually pro Viet Cong.

The techniques of operating in guerilla saturated territory, of establishing contacts with friendly inhabitants, and of gradually building up a clandestine espionage and political network, require great skill and training on the part of experienced counter-guerilla special forces. Experiences in Vietnam's Northwest Frontier Region is a good illustration of the application of unconventional efforts to this problem, although it would be overly hopeful to expect the Frontier Force to clear and pacify so difficult a region. The location of the area close to zones of Viet Cong concentrations and additional forces from without signify that a much stronger effort will be needed.

5. *SEATO* In certain carefully delimited spheres, a combined effort by as many SEATO members as are willing to participate might enhance the overall result sought in the Taylor Report. If the commitment remained at approximately the same level as under the

anticipated American involvement, the organization, its Asian members and South Vietnam might all draw benefits.

We have already noted that SEATO members can contribute specialist training forces and perhaps unit leaders for specific types of combat. In addition, Thailand and the Philippines might be able to set up training centers, so that our long-projected concept of a SEATO counter-guerilla school might finally be realized as a by-product of this endeavor. SEATO naval patrols could aid the hard-pressed VNN in both operations and training. Experts from SEATO countries could participate in the multiple intelligence efforts (training and operations) stressed in the Report.

It might also be possible to send special SEATO detachments, of very small size, to frontier regions as observers, or perhaps to establish intricate communications and surveillance networks again for operational and training assistance to the ARVN. SEATO officers might man the parallel control organization noted in #2 above if an American presence of such intensity appears inadvisable. Thai Border Guards, trained by our own Special Forces, might in turn be able to assist in the training and operations problems of the GVN Frontier Force.

A primary objection to the employment of the SEATO label stems from the intense Vietnamese distrust of the French, whom they blame for Kong Le's defection and a good deal of the trouble in Laos. On the other hand, France and, to a lesser extent, Britain are the two powers most likely to oppose any SEATO action. To the extent that it is possible, the rest of the SEATO allies could decide on a joint ad hoc program, along the level of intensity suggested in the Report, and proceed without their European allies. In a sense, this would be a cautious de facto follow-up of the trial balloon floated by the Thais last summer when they proposed that SEATO's European members quietly dissociate themselves from SEATO actions if they so desired.

A partial SEATO participation, however moderate at first, could set the stage for the implementation of its more ambitious efforts, plans 5 or 7[*] as noted in the Report. It would set a precedent for the participation of regional organizations in a defense against indirect aggression. It would help demonstrate that a besieged land has more of a choice than capitulation or dependence solely and publicly on the United States. Since we must bear the brunt of the burden in any event, the successful invocation of SEATO participation even on a partial basis, would enhance our diplomatic and moral position as well as hopefully relieve some of our direct military responsibilities.

[*] Neither found

6. *U.S. Non-Combat Forces as an Entering Wedge* The Taylor Report made considerable use of the current flood disaster, as an occasion for the introduction of American military personnel into Vietnam. The circumstances are admittedly favorable, for the humanitarian aspects and evident need for sizeable aid point to a rare juncture of strategic and social welfare considerations.

This proposal could in effect become the first stage application of the U.S. Army's recently developed concept of Foreign Liaison Assistance Group (FLAG). Under this concept, we would introduce American forces into a troubled zone in three waves—humanitarian and civic action, followed by Special Forces as needed, and regular troops in force should the situation get out of hand. Thus the first group is literally an entering wedge, available to facilitate the arrival of the other two, in case of need. The Report itself notes with approval CINCPAC's estimate of that in the event of any of three contingencies (the seizure of the Kontum area, an assault on Saigon, a major Vietminh overt assault) we would have to respond quickly with force already earmarked and deployed for action. This recommendation fits into the FLAG concept which requires that the second and third waves and their logistical support be in position in advance.

This leads to the crux of the issue. A force of 8,000 engineers is of limited value unless it augurs more to come—unless it is a token of a US commitment that will be honored as needed. The entering move will evoke protests from disaffected groups in Saigon as well as from neighboring neutrals. The legality of an intervention based on the appeal of a sovereign state does not end our political difficulties, as the Lebanon episode demonstrated.

An engineering force is of little value once its immediate job is done. Its continued presence after the original task is completed will bring more political costs. There would be new political consequences from its withdrawal. Yet of itself, it has not assured or facilitated, except in a marginal way, the possible further commitment of US combat troops. We must, at the outset contemplate the possible need to follow through with this further effort, should the need arise. Otherwise we might finish in a worse diplomatic and strategic posture than if we had not sent any units in to begin with.

There is a further danger that our initial move may be considered out of context, as one of a series of possible measures we could take, graded in intensity and separate from one another. Some recent American contingency studies have already placed the engineer commitment in that category. The idea that such a move of itself will automatically boost GVN morale—although admittedly the move is of little use against the Viet Cong—is difficult to support. It will be even more difficult to support should the situation worsen.

We should recognize that a major indication of this sort makes it very difficult for us to withdraw. It should be undertaken only as part of a more fundamental decision to follow through with a Korean-scale action if need be, and to begin recruiting and deploying troops accordingly.

Since the flood repair operation is essential in its own right, we could devise alternate methods of approach. A mixed U.S. army–civilian force could perform the basic tasks, with the military aspects played down. A SEATO operation along the "economic help" line devised in recent years could be mounted, while still pointing up the diplomatic-military overtones to the Communist Bloc. Finally, we could call upon various interested agencies for technical and expert help—ECAFE for broad-based UN-oriented economic surveys, WHO for health control, as well as FAO for food stocks.

7. *Stress on Provinces for Political Effort* Since Diem has fostered the influence of the Provincial Chiefs in order to reduce the centralized authority of the military—at great cost in military efficiency (in planning, command, field communications, and coordination)—he is not likely to suffer loss of direct political influence "at the bottom" lightly. Under such circumstances, the establishment of the provinces as sources of power apart from Diem will be a most difficult undertaking. Such a loss would not only deprive Diem of direct authority, but would lead him to feel that his main bulwark against the military in Saigon was disintegrating.

Since the provincial approach has the advantage of reform at the source as well as possibilities for immediate impact, it must be preserved. However to the fullest extent possible, it must be couched in terms that eliminate the possibility that Diem is conspicuously losing his authority—an outcome which few rulers have proved willing to countenance even in the national interest. Hence the approach can succeed only if it is couched in terms of building up the channel of power Diem himself favored originally and of strengthening it as a counterweight to the military. The establishment of a more adequate provincial administration, the development of a police force, and the emergence of a provincial government sympathetic and responsive to peasant needs will indeed strengthen the civilian branch of the government. (The military status of the Provincial Chiefs is, as noted in the report, a device to control the armed forces and prevent the evolution of their autonomous power.)

This touches on a fundamental problem we face in all underdeveloped lands, especially those with high military threats or advanced military posture. The military area of the government, thanks to outside help, is usually educated, trained and equipped for [*far?*] beyond the state's ability to sustain such an effort. The military

leaders, especially if indoctrinated in the civic action concept, possess some technical competence in the area of civilian action. They soon arrogate to themselves the moral and political right to judge the honesty, adequacy and modernity of a government. From here to a coup, as was tried in Vietnam, is a small, logical step.

We have an obligation in Vietnam and elsewhere to bolster the civilian components of the government. An enhancement of civilian power and prestige in Saigon and in the provinces will do much to offset the fear of the military so prevalent in Diem's thinking. If our efforts improve provincial rule (especially in keeping the government on good terms with peasants who have to be resettled for strategic reasons like the Meo, or because of the flood) and loosen Diem's control over the provinces at the same time, the results will be a three-fold bonus. In light of the dangerous situation in Saigon, the move to broaden the base of political power should be coupled with a strengthening of the civilian bureaucracy. These are vital preconditions for the struggle ahead, and they would probably insure the loyalty and subordination of the military leadership. The latter could then be given the coordinating and command authority so desperately needed.

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260. Memorandum From Robert H. Johnson of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) [1]

Washington, November 16, 1961.

SUBJECT

India and the Viet Nam ICC

I have been thinking about the President's remark that you reported to me on India's role in the Viet Nam ICC.[2] Although I am not sure of the precise context in which it was made, I have been disturbed by its possible implications.

As I understand it, we and the Vietnamese will announce that we are no longer bound by certain provisions of the Geneva Accords. (This subject is not covered in yesterday's messages to Sai-

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[1] Source: Department of State, S/P Files: Lot 67 D 548, R. Johnson Chron. Secret.

[2] Apparently a reference to the President's remarks at the National Security Council meeting on November 15; see Document 254.

gon;[3] I don't know why.) We believe that it will then be up to the ICC to establish that North Viet Nam as well as we are violating the Accords. . . .

In my opinion, when we announce that we are no longer bound by the Accords the ICC will be pretty well washed up in Viet Nam. To hope that following such an event it will become a much more effective instrument for the sole purpose of establishing North Viet Nam as an aggressor seems to me quite optimistic. Perhaps the Indians . . . have indicated that they will take the ICC more seriously, but did he commit himself to such action in the context of a decision by the U.S. to state that it is no longer bound by the Accords?

. . . How much of value can we hope to get out of the ICC? At best, we might get a judgment by the Indian and Canadian members substantiating some of the Vietnamese charges against North Viet Nam. It would be an important advance which would help us establish the basis for current and future U.S. actions. . . . .

Robert H. Johnson[4]

[3] See Document 237 and footnote 2 thereto.
[4] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

261. Memorandum From the Legal Adviser (Chayes) to the Secretary of State[1]

Washington, November 16, 1961.

SUBJECT

Report of Taylor Mission on Viet-Nam[2]

I have reviewed General Taylor's report on Viet-Nam and the proposed action documents stemming from it (draft instructions to Embassy Saigon and draft letter from President Diem to President

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-1661. Top Secret. Drafted by Chayes and sent to the Secretary through S/S and Johnson (U). Initialed by both Chayes and Johnson. Attached to the source text is the following note of November 16 from Chayes to the Secretary: "This preparation of this memorandum and its attachments was undertaken before yesterday's NSC decisions. I believe that the analysis and observations given below will continue to be relevant, both in the carrying out of those decisions and in deliberations on further steps in the future."
[2] Document 210.

Kennedy).[3] Attached is a memorandum (Tab A) which examines the proposed actions from the legal point of view. This memorandum concludes that, apart from any measures involving military operations deep into North Viet-Nam, the proposed actions do not present legal problems incapable of being dealt with and surmounted. The memorandum suggests some changes that ought to be made in the planning for these actions if it is decided to proceed with the general course plotted out by the Taylor Mission. These changes would be designed to improve the defensibility of our actions and to avoid consequences that would be prejudicial to the interests of South Viet-Nam and the United States. There is also (Tab B)[4] a suggested revision of certain paragraphs of the draft letter from President Diem.

Thus, apart from the possibility of long-range attacks into North Viet-Nam, the issues in deciding on our future course of action are essentially political. But we must remember that the extent to which resort to direct self-help, rather than to the procedures and institutions for peaceful settlement of international problems, has an important bearing on the prospects and effectiveness of the rule of law in the world. Because of my deep concern with these matters, I should like to give you my thoughts on the less technically legal issues in relation to Viet-Nam.

General Taylor's analysis of the situation in South Viet-Nam shows that the basic causes of deterioration and threatened collapse of non-Communist authority are not military but political. But the remedies proposed would undertake to cope with the situation principally by military and semi-military means. The central feature of the course would be the initial introduction of substantial numbers of United States troops to help in pacifying the country. It is said that to embark on this course we must be prepared to escalate, if necessary, to the dimensions of a Korea-type conflict. In assessing the prospects for this course the long history of attempts to prop up unpopular governments through the use of foreign military forces is powerfully discouraging. The French experience in this very area, as well as our own efforts since 1955, reveal the essential inadequacy of the sort of program now proposed. The drawbacks of such intervention in Viet-Nam now would be compounded, not relieved, by the United States penetration and assumption of co-responsibility at all levels of the Vietnamese Government suggested in the Taylor Report.

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[3] Drafts of telegram 619 to Saigon (see footnote 2, Document 237) and the letter quoted in Document 237.

[4] Not printed.

In my view, a more promising course of action would be to seek to internationalize the problem with a view to a negotiated settlement or a United Nations solution. I believe we should take advantage of Ambassador Harriman's presence at Geneva and his working relations with Pushkin to sound out the Soviets on the possibility of a negotiated settlement in Viet-Nam. Mr. Harriman has discussed this problem with me and has shown me the memorandum which he has given you on this subject.[5] I concur generally in his proposals.

If Ambassador Harriman's efforts should produce no affirmative result we should also consider the advisability of taking the Viet-Nam problem to the United Nations. We would particularly seek to establish in the United Nations the facts of foreign intervention in Viet-Nam, and to enlist the United Nations' assistance in protecting the independence and integrity of Viet-Nam. Attached at Tab C[6] is a memorandum outlining a course of action in the United Nations.

You have often said with reference to the Berlin question that, in view of the magnitude of the stakes, we owe it to ourselves, to the American people and to our allies and associates in the free world, to exhaust the possibilities of a negotiated or peaceful settlement which will be consistent with our interests and responsibilities. The alternative to such a settlement is no less grave in Southeast Asia.

[Tab A]

Memorandum Prepared in the Office of the Legal Adviser[7]

General Taylor's Report on Viet-Nam recommends among other things that additional United States military personnel and equipment be introduced into South Viet-Nam to provide increased airlift, for expanded intelligence operations, for naval surveillance activities, and to expedite training and equipping of South Vietnamese military and civil guard elements. The question of whether additional United States forces should be introduced even to the extent of a Korea-type operation and whether we may eventually have to attack the source of guerilla aggression in North Viet-Nam is also discussed.

It has been suggested in connection with the Taylor Report that because South Viet-Nam did not sign the Geneva Accords, it is not

[5] Apparently a reference to Document 239.
[6] Not printed.
[7] Top Secret. No drafting or clearance information is given on the source text.

bound by them. In any case, it is said, North Vietnamese violations of the Accords have made them inoperative, and the Accords can be ignored by South Viet-Nam in taking actions to meet the present danger. In addition, it has been suggested that the right of self-defense under the United Nations Charter can be invoked to justify actions now contemplated by the United States in South Viet-Nam.

The legal implications of these proposed actions and suggested rationale are discussed below. As with all legal principles, the application of the particular principles of law discussed herein depends upon the facts of the case. One of the steps necessary to the successful development and projection of our case in the international forum is a much fuller development than presently exists of the facts concerning external interference in Viet-Nam, such as those disclosed in the Jorden Report. We must remain continuously alert to ways in which facts that bring the legal principles into operation—such as the facts of external interference—can be gathered from reliable sources and persuasively presented.

1954 Geneva Accords

This office has never accepted the argument that South Viet-Nam is not bound by the Geneva Accords of 1954 because it did not sign them. While the representative of South Viet-Nam did not sign the agreement and in fact protested against certain provisions in it, it was signed by the French on behalf of the French Union Forces, and since the State of Viet-Nam was part of the French Union it would seem to be bound by the French signature. The agreement relating to Laos was similarly signed on behalf of the French Union Forces without a Laotian signature, yet we have always considered the Kingdom of Laos bound by the Accords. South Viet-Nam can also be considered bound by the Accords as a successor state to France. In any event the argument to the contrary leads to very undesirable consequences, for if the South Vietnamese are not parties to the Accords and not bound by them, they would seem to have no legal basis for demanding compliance by the Viet Minh with obligations under the Accords such as respect for the demarcation line and the cease-fire.

Unlike Viet-Nam, the United States did not become a party to the Accords. It issued a unilateral declaration stating that it would refrain from the threat or use of force to disturb them and that it would view any renewal of aggression in violation of the Accords with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security.

The Geneva Accords prohibit the introduction into Viet-Nam of foreign troop reinforcements, additional military personnel and in-

creased amounts of war material. In the absence of adequate legal justification, introduction of United States military personnel and equipment as envisaged in the Taylor Report would therefore, in our view, be a violation of the Accords by South Viet-Nam. Such action would not be inconsistent with the unilateral declaration of the United States, since it would not constitute the threat or use of force to upset the Accords. Nevertheless, again in the absence of adequate legal justification, the United States would be aiding and abetting violations by South Viet-Nam.

Justifications for the actions presently contemplated may be found in general principles of international law governing treaties. Under these principles, a material breach of a treaty by one party entitles the other either to suspend the operation of the entire agreement or at least to withhold compliance with an equivalent, corresponding or related provision until resumption of observance by the other party. The Viet Minh have violated the Geneva Accords by directing, assisting and engaging in active hostilities in South Viet-Nam and presumably by illegal introduction into North Viet-Nam of military personnel and war materials.

Justification of suspension of certain parts of the Geneva Accords would gain force in the present context from the fact that actions contemplated by the Government of Viet-Nam which might be said to contravene the Accords can be related to the requirements of legitimate self-defense necessitated by the breaches of the other party.

Thus, under the applicable principles, we would have the option of suspending the agreement in toto or of withholding compliance with appropriate provisions. In our judgment, the United States and South Viet-Nam should choose the latter course, since we will wish to assert the continuing force of a number of obligations which the Viet-Minh have undertaken under the Accords. The demarcation line itself between North and South Viet-Nam is established by the Accords, as is the requirement for the general cessation of hostilities. It should be recognized, however, that the adoption of this course imposes upon us some obligation to keep our response appropriately related to the infractions of the other side.

Though we believe that the introduction of additional military forces and equipment into South Viet-Nam for the purposes described at the beginning of this memorandum would be justified at law, there is no doubt that the Communists will claim, and with a certain plausibility, that South Viet-Nam has violated the Accords, aided and abetted by the United States. To the extent that the contemplated measures can be cast in the form of assistance and training to police and constabulary forces rather than the introduc-

tion and training of regular troops, the persuasive force of these complaints will be lessened.

General Intervention

Assuming that the Geneva Accords are not a barrier to actions contemplated in the Taylor Report, the question arises as to whether there are any other legal obstacles to such actions under general international law or the United Nations Charter.

International law permits the United States to introduce its forces into South Viet-Nam at the invitation of the Government of Viet-Nam to assist that Government in quelling insurgent activities having substantial external support, inspiration or direction. There is nothing in the United Nations Charter that prohibits such action.

In 1958, at the invitation of the President of Lebanon, and in circumstances of alleged indirect aggression against the Government of Lebanon by outside forces or governments, United States troops were sent to Lebanon. President Eisenhower explained that this action was taken in part "to encourage the Lebanese Government in defense of Lebanese sovereignty and integrity."

As in the Lebanese situation, however, we should be prepared to defend United States action in Viet-Nam in an international forum such as the United Nations, whether the question is brought there at our own or someone else's initiative.

Retaliatory Attacks

As to the problem of attacking the source of guerilla aggression in North Viet-Nam there are two currently relevant categories of fact situations:

1) The first category relates to operations undertaken against bases near the border in North Viet-Nam and Laos which are being used as a sanctuary and for supply purposes by the Viet Cong. It would seem justifiable under international law principles relating to hot pursuit to follow the enemy across the border and attempt to destroy his bases of operations adjacent to the border. Such operations would have to be appropriately related to the act provoking them, proportionate in their effects and limited to action necessary to obtain relief.

2) The second category consists of direct attacks against Hanoi and similar strategic centers deep inside North Viet-Nam. In the absence of overt aggression by means of armed attack against South Viet-Nam, such action would go beyond permissible self-defense under general international law and would be contrary to the United Nations Charter.

The right of individual or collective self-defense referred to in Article 51 of the Charter can be invoked only in the event of an armed attack. The term "armed attack" as used in the Charter is

generally understood as a direct external attack upon one country by the armed forces of another such as the German invasion of Poland in 1939 or the North Korean attack on South Korea in 1950. Armed attack is a form of aggression. "Aggression" is a broader concept, covering a range of actions by which one state may threaten the territorial integrity or political independence of another. This difference is recognized in international law generally, in the United Nations Charter and in our mutual defense treaties. In the latter the term "armed attack" has been expressly or implicitly limited to exclude indirect aggression.

An essential element in determining whether an action constitutes an "armed attack" is the factor of time. An armed attack is an action which occurs swiftly, requiring *immediate* measures to ward it off. The "armed attack" envisaged under Article 51 of the Charter is an attack which requires immediate measures of self-defense, measures which cannot await the action of the United Nations but which must be undertaken at once. By the same token "armed attack" under such agreements as the North Atlantic Treaty, the Southeast Asia Treaty, and the Rio Treaty implies a situation in which a response is required before the normal consultative procedures can be availed of.

Article 2(4) of the Charter prohibits any use of force by a United Nations member in its international relations which is inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations. Article 51 of the Charter recognizes the right of individual or collective use of force in self-defense against armed attack without waiting for steps to be taken by any United Nations organ. In cases of aggression that fall short of armed attack, however, it would not be consistent with the purposes of the United Nations for the United States as a UN member to proceed to the use of armed force to defeat acts which it considers aggressive. In such cases, it would be incumbent upon a UN member to bring the matter first to the attention of the United Nations organization for its consideration and judgment.

262. Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev [1]

Washington, November 16, 1961.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I have now had a chance to study your most recent two letters on the German problem and on Laos and Vietnam. [2] I shall be writing you again about Germany and Berlin, but I do wish to give you my thoughts about Laos and Vietnam as soon as possible.

In writing to you, I am conscious of the difficulties you and I face in establishing full communication between our two minds. This is not a question of translation but a question of the context in which we hear and respond to what each other has to say. You and I have already recognized that neither of us will convince the other about our respective social systems and general philosophies of life. These differences create a great gulf in communication because language cannot mean the same thing on both sides unless it is related to some underlying common purpose. I cannot believe that there are not such common interests between the Soviet and the American people. Therefore, I am trying to penetrate our ideological differences in order to find some bridge across the gulf on which we could bring our minds together and find some way in which to protect the peace of the world.

[Here follow two paragraphs on the situation in Laos.]

As to the situation in Vietnam, I must tell you frankly that your analysis of the situation there and the cause of the military action which has occurred in Southern Viet-Nam is not accurate. Precisely because of the visit of such Americans as Vice President Johnson and General Taylor we are, as you yourself recognize, well informed as to the situation in that country. I do not wish to argue with you concerning the government structure and policies of President Ngo Dinh Diem, but I would like to cite for your consideration the evidence of external interference or incitement which you dismiss in a phrase.

I would draw your attention to a letter sent by the Government of Vietnam to the International Control Commission concerning the North Vietnam subversion and aggression against Vietnam, dated October 24, 1961. [3] I would urge that you should read this document very carefully since it contains evidence of a planned and consistent effort on the part of the DRV to overthrow by violence the

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[1] Source: Department of State, Presidential Correspondence: Lot 77 D 163, JFK–Khrushchev 1961–62, Top Secret.

[2] Neither printed. (*Ibid.*)

[3] Not printed. (*Ibid.*, Central Files, 751K.00/11–861)

legitimate government of South Vietnam. I would like to add that the evidence contained in this document is known to the United States to be accurate and sober. Many more incidents of the type outlined in this document could be deduced from our own experience and our own direct knowledge. I might point out here that in effect from 1954, the signature of the Geneva Accords, until 1959, the situation in Vietnam was relatively tranquil. The country was effecting a limited recovery from the ravages of the civil war from which it had just emerged. The Government enjoyed the support of the people and the prospects for the future appeared reasonably bright. However, in 1959, the DRV having failed in the elections which had been held in Vietnam and in the attempt to arouse the people against their legitimate government, turned to a calculated plan of open infiltration, subversion, and aggression. During the Third Party Congress of the Lao Dong Party the Secretary General Le Duan stated. "There does not exist any other way outside of that which consists in the overthrow of the dictatorial and Fascist regime of the American-Diemist clique in order to liberate totally South Vietnam, with a view to realizing national unity." As indicated in the document to which I have referred, you will find this statement in the *Nhan Dan, Hanoi Daily* Number 2362 of September 6, 1960.

It is the firm opinion of the United States Government that Southern Vietnam is now undergoing a determined attempt from without to overthrow the existing government using for this purpose infiltration, supply of arms, propaganda, terrorization, and all the customary instrumentalities of communist activities in such circumstances, all mounted and developed from North Vietnam.

It is hardly necessary for me to draw your attention to the Geneva Accords of July 20–21, 1954. The issue, therefore, is not that of some opinion or other in regard to the government of President Ngo Dinh Diem, but rather that of a nation whose integrity and security is threatened by military actions, completely at variance with the obligations of the Geneva Accords.

Insofar as the United States is concerned, we view the situation in which the Republic of Vietnam finds itself with the utmost gravity and, in conformity with our pledge made at the Geneva Conference on July 21, 1954,[5] as one seriously endangering international peace and security. Our support for the government of President Ngo Dinh Diem we regard as a serious obligation, and we will undertake such measures as the circumstances appear to warrant. Since there is no semblance of any threat to the DRV by the Government of Vietnam, it is clear that if the DRV were honorably

[5] For Under Secretary Smith's statement at Geneva on July 21, 1954, see *Foreign Relations*, 1952–1954, vol. XVI, p. 1500.

to discharge the obligations it undertook in the Geneva Accords, the prospects for peace would be improved. I would, therefore, venture to suggest that you, as the head of a government which was a signatory to the Geneva Accords, should use all the influence that you possess and endeavor to bring the DRV to the strict observance of these Accords. This would be a great act in the cause of peace which you refer to as the essence of the policies of the Twenty-second Party Congress. If the DRV were to abide by its obligations under the Geneva Accords, there would be no need for the United States to consider, as we must at the present, how best to support the Government of Vietnam in its struggle for independence and national integrity.

I have written you frankly about Laos and Vietnam for a very simple reason. Both these countries are at a distance from our own countries and can be considered areas in which we ought to be able to find agreement. I am suggesting to you that you use every means at your disposal to insure a genuinely neutral and independent Laos, as those words are commonly understood throughout the world, and to insure that those closely associated with you leave South Vietnam alone. On our part, we shall work toward a neutral and independent Laos and will insure that North Vietnam not be the object of any direct or indirect aggression. This would be a step toward peace. I am reluctant to believe that there is any necessary alternative to be imposed upon my country by the actions of others.

I am leaving for a few days for a visit to the western part of our country and will be in touch with you on other matters when I return.

Sincerely,[1]

[1] The source text is not signed.

263. Editorial Note

At a press conference on November 17, Secretary Rusk made an introductory statement about several issues, including Vietnam. He said that the accelerated North Vietnamese campaign to overthrow the South Vietnamese Government was "a threat to the peace" and was "of major and serious concern not only to the people of Viet-Nam and their immediate neighbors but also to all other free nations." The Secretary noted that there had also been "an accelera-

tion of deliveries under our mutual defense assistance program" to South Vietnam and that some changes could be expected "in the nature of our training under the military advisory and training program . . . ." For the complete text of the Secretary's statement, as well as his replies to questions asked about Vietnam, see Department of State *Bulletin*, December 4, 1961, pages 918–922.

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264. Memorandum From Robert H. Johnson of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) [1]

Washington, November 17, 1961.

SUBJECT

Use of Defoliants in Viet Nam

It seems to me that if we are going to cope successfully with charges that we are engaged in germ or poison gas warfare, we must make the general character of the operations as open and above board as possible. Would it be possible to get the ICC to examine every drum of the defoliant mixture to determine that it is what we say it is? If we are going to pursue the policy of letting the ICC find out itself whether we are violating the Geneva Accords, this may be impossible. It may be difficult, in any event, to get the ICC to agree to any such action. An alternative approach would be to bring in some other international group or perhaps a group of private scientists. Publicity ought to emphasize the fact (I believe it is a fact) that the chemical agents involved are the same kind that are used by farmers against weeds.

I think that the adverse political consequences of the operation would also be less if this is not the first concrete move that is announced in connection with our stepped-up effort in Viet Nam. If it could be put in the context of a comprehensive story of what we plan to do and why we plan to do it, we shall be much better off. There is some danger that North Viet Nam, which has already got hold of our general plans and begun a propaganda operation, can exploit this operation to the point where its propaganda would be a quite effective backfire against our subsequent charges of DRV involvement in the South.

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[1] Source: Department of State, S/P Files: Lot 67 D 548, Sept.–Dec. 1961: Secret.

It seems to me important that this question be got to the President on an urgent basis, possibly this weekend, no later than Monday.[2] If we are *not* going ahead we ought to stop our preparatory efforts quickly. Otherwise we may pay many of the political costs while reaping no military advantages.

The cost estimates on this program seem to have gone upward continuously. Whereas earlier this week I understood that the total cost was on the order of $4 million ($1 million for chemicals and $3 million for air transport), I now understand that it may be on the order of $10–15 million. This estimate is for just the initial phase operation—the attack on the food supplies. Other estimates have put total possible cost of the three-phase program at $70 million or more. I think that these figures raise serious questions with respect to the comparative value of this as opposed to other measures we might take in Viet Nam.

As you probably know, subsequent phases would involve selective defoliation in Zone D and of the communications routes between Saigon and other key cities and defoliation along the Cambodian border. If I understand a recent Department telegram[3] correctly, we have in mind defoliating an area near, but not on, the border, but at a constant distance from it. Will this accomplish the purpose?

I am not certain whether the President is being asked to approve all three phases. Politically, the defoliation of areas around Zone D and along the roads to the principal cities would seem to present least difficulties. If we should decide against the operation directed at VC crops, we might still decide to go ahead with Zone D and roadside operation. The principal political danger in it may be to turn non-Communist villagers whose crops are accidentally destroyed against the government. That is, of course, one of the political drawbacks of all three proposed phases.

I would recommend that, since State and Defense are now to discuss the the subject this afternoon,[4] they might consider preparing a joint paper for the President. The Defense draft ought clearly to state the technical military case for case. (A bootleg copy of a

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[2] November 20.

[3] Telegram 562 to Saigon, November 10. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-961)

[4] This discussion took place at the Department of State at 2 p.m. on November 17 and included U. Alexis Johnson, William Bundy, and Rostow, among others. (Memorandum from Bagley to Taylor, November 18, National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-127-69)

draft [5] which I have seen did not.) The State draft ought to discuss the political problems in the area and worldwide.

Relevant recent cable traffic is attached. [6]

Robert H. Johnson [7]

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[5] Not found, but apparently a reference to a draft of a memorandum of November 21 from Gilpatric to the President. (Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 66 A 3542, Vietnam 1962-370.64)

[6] Not found attached to the source text.

[7] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

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265. Memorandum From the Assistant Director, Far East (Neilson), to the Director of the United States Information Agency (Murrow) [1]

Washington, November 17, 1961

SUBJECT

Use of Defoliants in Viet-Nam

I am informed that the Department of Defense has drafted a memorandum to the White House seeking the President's decision on the use of defoliants in Viet-Nam. [2] The Secretary of State's concurrence is to be sought before submission to the President.

A member of my staff saw the memorandum in the Viet-Nam Task Force office yesterday. No copies were available.

The memo, briefly, lists two principal objectives in using defoliants: Deny food to Viet Cong units, establish a denuded area along Viet-Nam borders (with Cambodia, or Laos, or both) to check Viet Cong infiltration. Also listed are negative factors, mainly psychological, which should be taken into consideration in the decision-making process.

The status of this controversial subject thus is: The Government of Viet-Nam, the U.S. Country Team in Saigon and the Department of Defense urge employment of defoliant as an effective tactic to hinder Viet Cong depredations. In proposing the action, consider-

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 306, USIA/IOP Files: FRC 67 A 222, IAF Defoliation 1963. Secret. A note on the source text indicates that copies were sent to Wilson, Sorenson (IOP), and Slaton (IAF). The source text is Sorenson's copy and bears his typewritten name in the margin and the handwritten notation, "TCS. Must reading. BY." "BY" has not been identified.

[2] See footnote 5, *supra*.

ation was given to so-called public relations or psychological factors. For instance, tests on foliage in or around Saigon would be made publicly to demonstrate that the chemicals employed are not harmful to humans and animals; the GVN itself would mount a publicity campaign explaining the security benefits which would accrue; unmarked aircraft piloted by "civilians" would be employed in spraying flights to guard against charges that "American military adventurists" are involved; etc.

I don't know whether the following factors have been taken into consideration thus far in the decision-making process in Washington.

(1) The use of chemical weaponry in an Asian country could create such a storm of criticism that possible short-range military advantages on the ground in Viet-Nam might be outweighed by a harvest of ill-will deleterious to certain long-ranged goals in Viet-Nam and the region (Southeast Asia).

(2) The communist bloc will, of course, make great propaganda capital of this undertaking by "the U.S. and its stooge Diem." We all recall the propaganda circus created by the communists on alleged U.S. use of "germ warfare" in Korea on the basis of fabricated evidence.

I am no military strategist or tactician, although I did learn a few things about chemical or bacteriological warfare (most of it hair-raising) at the Air War College. Perhaps defoliation can be a critical factor in exposing Viet Cong strongholds and destroying Viet Cong food supplies. If it is, and must be used, we can take the psychological bumps which are certain to be dealt to us. But the spectre of charges that "U.S. imperialists are waging germ warfare on Asians" haunts me.

The decision is to be left to the President. I recommend you discuss the subject in its varied ramifications with Walt Rostow.

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266. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, November 18, 1961—2 p.m.

678. Ref Deptels 618 and 619.[2] I saw President Diem at 5 pm Nov 17 to convey President Kennedy's decisions on Taylor report

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11–1861. Top Secret; Niact; Limit Distribution. Repeated priority to Bangkok and CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] See footnote 2, Document 257.

concerning SVN. President Diem had interrupted inspection trip in central Viet Nam to return to Saigon to receive me. Interview lasted two and one-half hours; was candid, direct, and fundamental.

I read from, and later expanded on, paper[3] prepared from instructions reftels. Stressed theme of partnership requiring far-reaching and difficult measures on both sides. Left Diem to do some hard thinking of his own on required GVN actions, and did not at this stage present list of specifics with respect GVN reorganization.

I gave him detailed outline of proposed US actions contained paras 1, 5 and 6 of reftel[4] and, for precision, left him paper containing full substance sub-paras H through J para 1, less FYI portion sub-para G.

I believe I made it unmistakably clear, and repeated the point several times, that US readiness to go ahead with proposed joint effort depends heavily on his coming up with proposed GVN actions in administrative, political and social fields which will be recognized as having real substance and meaning. I urged that he let me know as soon as possible his ideas on this point, as well as on our proposal as a whole.

Diem promised to do so and did not at this stage attempt to give a considered reaction to our proposal. As anticipated, his first question was re introduction US combat troops. I replied along lines para 4 reftel and pointed out that measures set out paras 1A, B and C would involve US uniformed military personnel in roles which could expose them to enemy action. In response to Diem's question he [/?] said that in my personal opinion these personnel would be authorized to defend themselves if attacked. I pointed out that this was one reason why the decisions were very grave from US standpoint and why we needed substantial GVN response on actions it proposed to take.

Diem said that he presumed I realized that our proposals involved the question of the responsibility of the Government of Viet Nam. Viet Nam, he said, did not want to be a protectorate.

I said that this was well understood, we for our part did not wish to make it one. Diem also pointed out that GVN was constantly in process of making reforms but major action could not be taken without thorough consideration and without having always in mind that there was a war to be won. Object was to restore order, not to create disorder. I said I recognized that this was a delicate judgment; in my opinion, as a friend of his country and of him, his greater risk was to stand pat, or act too cautiously. It was my sincere belief that it would be possible for him to streamline his government

[3] No copy of this paper has been found.
[4] I.e., telegram 619.

and delegate authority to a greater extent and, in addition, to take into the government and into his confidence capable people who are now sitting on the sidelines. In past he had told me that he had tried latter without success but I believed that if he tried once again and offered real responsibility to people on sidelines at this critical juncture, it would have great quieting effect on whole country. The President did not respond directly on this point. He did expatiate at length on the difficulty of finding people willing to accept responsibility, on the shortage of trained and able people, on the effects on the people of 80 years of French colonial rule, and on the mentality and habits of the Vietnamese people—a theme on which he has often elaborated in the past.

On the whole, I am not discouraged at Diem's reaction. In fact, he took our proposals rather better than I had expected. He has promised to call me as soon as he has been able to reflect upon our proposals and, until we have heard his considered reaction, I think it would be idle to speculate on outcome. He requested copy of paper from which I read and talked, which I am sending him. He said he would ask his Cabinet for ideas.

I urge that every possible effort be made to avoid leaks on nature of our proposals, particularly the "quid pro quo" aspects, in interest of getting result we desire.

Draft Diem–Kennedy letter not yet shown to Diem and will be modified accordance Deptel 635.[1]

Nolting

[1] Dated November 17, it offered suggested changes in the third and fourth sentences of paragraph 2 and the first sentence of paragraph 11 of the draft letter. (Department of State Central Files, 751K.00/11-1761)

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267. Editorial Note

On November 20 and 21, Ambassador Galbraith conveyed his views on Vietnam to President Kennedy in two telegrams which are printed in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pages 406–409 and 410–418. See also Galbraith, *Ambassador's Journal*, pages 250 ff.

268. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, November 21, 1961—2 p.m.

684. Task Force Vietnam Department has informed us [2] current policy approach re Geneva Accords is that we need not confirm to world that we disregarding Accords by increased aid to Vietnam and that GVN should counter charges violation not by admission but by countercharging DRV violations and insisting on ICC investigations of GVN charges if DRV charges to be investigated.

We agree with this approach as far as it goes, but believe that further development of our Geneva Accords position is necessary in order enable US meet (a) political need of reassuring Vietnamese public and preventing further morale deterioration through provision more information as to what US has been doing in way military assistance to Vietnam during past few months and, as decisions reached in future, what additional steps we are taking, and (b) desirability maintaining with local US correspondents reasonable status of credibility which now seriously stretched by our continued insistence US military personnel still within 685 ceiling; (c) Believe also that if and when US military personnel are given certain operational functions in Vietnam, USG may find it desirable to let American public know what they are doing so that it will be prepared for possible news of casualties.

Believe that we could meet above objectives to substantial degree if we could find means consistent with Geneva Accords of being more direct and forthright about increased US military personnel in Vietnam. We think this could be done by use rotation argument under Article 16 [3] to effect that American military personnel are replacing withdrawn French personnel. This was basis our argument to ICC in early 1960 when we increased MAAG to 685. At that time we said we had right to go up to 888, since French had at least that number training personnel in Vietnam when Geneva Accords concluded. Subsequently we learned from French military

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-2161. Secret. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd, New Delhi, Ottawa, Bangkok, Vientiane, London, Paris, Geneva for USUN, and Phnom Penh.

[2] Reference is to telegram 618, see footnote 2, Document 257.

[3] Article 16 of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam, signed at Geneva on July 20, 1954, stipulated seven conditions under which the "rotation of units and groups of personnel, the arrival in Viet-Nam of individual personnel on a temporary duty basis and the return to Viet-Nam of individual personnel after short periods of leave or temporary duty outside Viet-Nam" would be permitted. (*Foreign Relations*, 1952–1954, vol. xvi, pp. 1505–1520)

attaché Saigon that French training cadres in 1954 actually amounted to about 3,500.

Believe we should inform Canadians and Indians bilaterally (not through formal ICC channel except in answer to eventual ICC letter requesting explanation) that we now intend take advantage this fact for further augmentation MAAG in light growing DRV threat. Department will recall this is essentially line we intended to take some months ago but Canadians in Saigon objected and said Indians would not go along. However, in light Washington discussions with Nehru, we would hope Indians would now be more forthcoming. (Have discussed here with Ambassador Galbraith.)

Seems desirable at present time avoid any reference to our "right" to replace French combat troops (who amounted to about 150,000 in 1954), because this would probably make it tactically harder to sell Indians and therefore Canadians on immediate case about increase in MAAG. We should however, keep this point in reserve for future use if needed.

In eventual publicity which we might undertake after establishing 3,500 justifications with Indians and Canadians, we do not think we would need to be rigidly careful to state publicly that all American military personnel in Vietnam are trainers and advisers only, but neither should be strident in stating that they are not. We believe that case by case decision as to what to state publicly would be best method, and that Embassy Saigon should be consulted in each case prior public announcements anywhere. Since it is likely we shall want to show that some American personnel are "operational" (such as projected helicopter crews), we should be prepared meet possible argument by DRV and Poles that this shows de facto military alliance in violation Article 19 Geneva Accords.[4] Believe our best way of meeting this if it arises would be to point out that as far as US is legally concerned only written treaty signed and ratified by two-thirds of Senate constitutes military alliance and that does not exist in case Vietnam.

Would appreciate Department's early reaction to above. If Department concurs suggest New Delhi and Ottawa be asked make prompt approaches to governments to which accredited, and that these approaches be pitched more in terms of informing those governments what we propose to do rather than asking for their concurrence. Meanwhile we would compile with view toward bol-

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[4] Article 19 reads: "With effect from the date of entry into force of the present Agreement, no military base under the control of a foreign State may be established in the re-grouping zone of either party; the two parties shall ensure that the zones assigned to them do not adhere to any military alliance and are not used for the resumption of hostilities or to further an aggressive policy." (*Ibid.*)

stering Vietnamese morale what we believe could be released locally with respect build-up US military assistance during recent months.

Nolting

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269. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President [1]

Washington, November 21, 1961.

SUBJECT

Viet-Nam Status Report

There is attached the first status report on recent decisions with respect to Viet-Nam. [2] This memorandum is designed to supplement that status report by providing additional clarifying information, covering subjects not covered in the report and bringing it up to date where additional information has been received.

The Military Situation. There has been continuing deterioration, but no major change, in the military situation. The crisis described in the Taylor Mission Report has not been reversed. There has been a recent step-up of Viet Cong activity in the Delta and GVN analysis suggests that the VC plans to broaden the area of Zone D north of Saigon. Though the Government has taken some military initiatives, its military operations have produced no significant results. There is one bit of evidence indicating that the Cambodians may have tightened their border somewhat and that the VC are raiding Cambodian border villages in retaliation.

Casualty rates remain at the higher level inaugurated in September, when the VC stepped up their offensive.

The Flood Situation. Each new report on the flood emphasizes the fact that its effects will not be so severe as had been feared initially. However, estimates of rice requirements which have fluctuated up and down have now been firmly estimated at the relatively high figure of 220,000 tons. Action to deal with this problem is reported in the status report. Meanwhile, Diem has established his own flood

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Memos and Reports. Secret. Initialed by Rostow.

[2] Dated November 20, not printed.

relief and reconstruction organization under an official who is well regarded by the American Embassy.

U.S. Economic Aid. AID in mid-October approved a level of $140 million for non-project aid (commercial imports) for FY 1962. Because of the floods and General Taylor's visit, this figure was never given to the Vietnamese. The Ambassador on November 16 requested that this level be increased to $160 million on the basis of new requirements created by the flood, particularly the need for rice.[3] Today he has sent a new message to the personal attention of Fowler Hamilton[4] requesting expedited action on this request on the grounds that it would be of great help in his current negotiations with Diem and is crucial to Vietnamese action to carry out exchange reform and other measures which were agreed in connection with the Staley Report. The request is receiving urgent consideration in State and AID.

The Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps. The item on this subject at the bottom of page 2 of the status report actually deals only with the Civil Guard. We have not yet reached agreement with the Vietnamese Government on a plan for the training of the Self Defense Corps. The Government rejected a MAAG proposal that members of the Corps be trained in the Civil Guard training centers on the grounds that such action would leave a security vacuum in the provinces. The GVN proposed instead to bring 3 to 5 thousand Nationalist Chinese military to Viet-Nam to provide "on-the-spot" training.[5] We are planning to make a counter-proposal for training of the Corps at thirty provincial training centers.

The Geneva Accords. As anticipated, we are already having some difficulties dealing with questions from newsmen and others on the relationship between our actions and the Geneva Accords. The problem has been contained for the moment, but can be expected to become more difficult as additional large items of military equipment are delivered.

New Management of the Sûreté. The Embassy is seizing upon the opportunities provided by change in leadership of the Sûreté. It is planning to propose development of a "National Communist Party

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[3] Toad 69 from Saigon, November 16, not found.

[4] Telegram 680 from Saigon, November 20. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-2061)

[5] On November 17, the Department of State's Executive Secretariat transmitted to McGeorge Bundy a memorandum of the same date drafted by Warren A. Silver of the Vietnam Task Force regarding Vietnamese requests for Chinese Nationalist assistance as well as tables prepared by Silver on U.S. economic and military assistance to South Vietnam during the period October 18–November 17, 1961. In a brief covering memorandum, Deputy Executive Secretary Melvin L. Manfull told Bundy that the attached memorandum and tables contained "the information you requested last night by phone for the President's use." (*Ibid.*, 751K.00/11-1761)

Penetration Service" . . . down to the provincial level and an improved police program with the support of the USOM.

Organizational Questions. General Taylor has been consulting with General Lemnitzer on the question of organization of U.S. military activities in Viet-Nam. The question of Washington organization for implementation of the action program is under consideration between State and Defense in consultation with General Taylor.

Weed Killer. You will be receiving papers from Defense and State soon raising the question of whether we should support the use of a weed killer to attack crops in the plateau area on which the VC feed and to clear jungle paths, notably for an attack on Zone D. Your decision is required because this is a kind of chemical warfare.

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270. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, November 22, 1961—noon.

687. Re Deptels 618, 619 and Embtel 678. [2] Saw Thuan November 20 on several matters, and in course conversation asked him what he could tell me re schedule of follow-up discussions with President Diem on recent demarche. This led to long, wide-ranging, and pessimistic account by Thuan of how things stand here. I do not take his pessimism too seriously—indeed it may be only bargaining tactic—and conversation gave me opportunity to clarify and put in proportion proposed "new partnership" envisaged in our position, and reasons for it.

Thuan said that Diem had not yet discussed fully with him U.S. proposals presented last Friday, [3] but had given him impression of being "very sad and very disappointed". Thuan said Diem had said he now hesitates to put proposals before even his Cabinet Ministers, fearing that they would be disappointed and lose heart. He had intended to discuss US proposals with both Cabinet and selected members of Assembly who had been consulted re advisability of US forces at time of Taylor Mission, but now thought contrast between his earlier question and US proposals too striking. Thuan conveyed impression that Diem is brood-

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878, 350 GVN Secret; Limit Distribution. Repeated to Bangkok and to CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Telegrams 618 and 619 are not printed, but see footnote 2, Document 257. Telegram 678 is printed as Document 266.

[3] November 17.

ing over US proposals and has made no move yet to develop specific ideas on actions GVN expected to take. Thuan said President's attitude seemed to be that US asking great concessions of GVN in realm its sovereignty, in exchange for little additional help; that this is great disappointment after discussions with General Taylor involving, in particular, concept of Delta Task Force; that Diem seemed to wonder whether US was getting ready to back out on Viet-Nam as, he suggested, we had done in Laos.

I told Thuan that if in fact President Diem had reacted in this manner after consideration our proposals, I wished to talk with him directly and soon. These are very serious matters to us as well as to GVN, and we cannot afford to have any misunderstandings, lack of clarity, or to deal at arms' length. What I had proposed on President Kennedy's instructions was a serious, difficult, and far-reaching set of proposals designed to reverse the trend and eventually to win the struggle in Viet-Nam. I said I was sure he knew this, and he confirmed it. I told him that we on our side had to have a structure for improved performance on the part of GVN in several areas, in order to make far-reaching political decision involving substantial additional US effort, manpower, resources, and prestige. Furthermore, the United States had no idea whatsoever of wanting to make South Viet-Nam a US "protectorate" (Diem's word); on contrary, if SVN could protect itself, nothing would please us more. The fact is that we are trying in a most difficult situation to develop means to help SVN protect itself, and measures we propose are very far-reaching indeed. I explained reasons why we considered introduction US combat forces, either in anti-guerrilla war or as garrison troops, unwise, and how we had searched for, and found, substantial measures to bolster GVN's own effort in anti-subversion war, which would be effective if GVN reorganized itself to make them so. I also emphasized the seriousness of our proposal to bring international pressure, and effective pressure, on Communist bloc to discontinue infiltrations. I elaborated on benefits to SVN from multi-national participation in civilian effort re rehabilitation flooded provinces.

Thuan seemed to be torn between appreciation of soundness and significance of our proposals and the difficulties, political, psychological and administrative, which Diem faces. He said frankly that given the structure of Vietnamese society, the paucity of people willing to assume responsibility, the tendency to analyze and criticize rather than to act, he shared President's fear that public acceptance of our proposals would disastrously weaken strong Diem leadership which he considers indispensable at this time. "Without his determined and active leadership, we would collapse." On other hand, he recognized our needs in terms US and world opinion. He inquired most earnestly whether our proposals could not be done "in

a practical manner", meaning step-by-step, without publicity, and without requiring any over-all GVN acceptance. He pointed to present reorganization and strengthening GVN intelligence service as a case in point. He said Diem would do these things one by one on a practical basis if right men could be found, but he would not accept anything that looked to public as a sweeping reorganization under US pressure. I told him that essentially it is results, not appearances, that we are seeking; that if GVN would come up with specific suggestions for improvements we would try to meet them on the means; but that our experience to date had led us to conclusion that real measures of decentralization and delegation of authority, strengthening of personnel in administrative positions, and broadening popular appeal are urgently required.

Turning to military, Thuan asked what sort of "new terms of reference" for MAAG are envisaged. I said that as minimum Chief MAAG would have to have command authority for any US operational forces introduced, in addition to present advisory authority as maximum, and depending on GVN needs and wishes, he might have a role like that General Van Fleet in Greece. I described how Greece, nearly submerged by Communism, had been able to reserve the trend and win, making full use of US operational advice as well as material aid, and that Greece is now a fully independent member of world community. Thuan said that in military command structure, as in so many others, there is grave lack of competent people willing to discharge responsibility. I said we could help in this. He said he knew we could, but trouble was that none of their people, especially military, liked to have their incompetence exposed. I asked him whether he was telling me that introduction of US advisors for operations would bring about such resentment on part ARVN officer corps as to cause military coup d'etat. He said that was what he had in mind. I said I thought we could find a way; it would depend on how the matter was handled and the quality of the men we might contribute. I again urged Thuan to urge President Diem to come up with specific proposals. I said we are not inflexible, but determined this time to work out a new partnership which would give real results and win the struggle, now going badly. We do not wish to take over, but we had to be assured that additional US commitments, plus present large-scale aid, was going to have real results. Otherwise, I saw no way of winning.

I think my best tactic is to wait a few days for Diem's response. I do not want to seem to be pressing him to buy our proposals, and I think Thuan will help.

Meanwhile I would appreciate prompt as possible clarification and elaboration on following (letters are keyed to sub-paragraphs numbered paragraph 1, Deptel 619):

(a) (b) (c). Would uniformed personnel referred to be armed and authorized at least to defend themselves? Any limitation on types of missions in which they could participate?

(a). What is composition in terms numbers aircraft and personnel of "increased airlift"? How soon could they reach Viet-Nam?

(b). Does this para refer to Jungle Jim unit already here, or is additional effort this area contemplated?

(c). What types and numbers of small craft are contemplated and when could they arrive? Would such craft, manned partly or wholly by US uniformed personnel, carry out patrols in coastal and inland waterways?

(f). What sort of "new terms of reference" are envisaged? It would plainly be necessary to broaden MAAG responsibility to include operational direction of US forces. Would this be accomplished by classified directive to Chief MAAG, or by openly establishing theater command?

(g). Is it possible to be more specific regarding "increased economic aid as may be required"?

(i). What are the areas other than military in which we would contemplate putting US administrators? Can we do this without publicity, insofar as possible?

Nolting

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271. Memorandum From the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) [1]

JCSM-812-61 *Washington, November 22, 1961*

SUBJECT

South Vietnam

1. Reference is made to the memorandum by the Secretary of Defense, dated 13 November 1961, subject as above [2]

2. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have considered the problem of establishing a new command structure for South Vietnam and believe that certain criteria should be established before initiating

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-185-69. Top Secret. Attached to a brief covering memorandum of November 28 from Lemnitzer's staff assistant, Richard R. Day, to Taylor, indicating that Lemnitzer had asked that the memorandum be sent to Taylor for his information. For William Bundy's comments in a memorandum to McNamara, November 25, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, p. 449.

[2] Document 245.

major changes in the present command organization. Such changes should be preceded by:

a. A firm agreement with President Diem on the program of joint effort that the United States is proposing.

b. Clearly defined United States objectives that will be pursued in South Vietnam.

3. The Joint Chiefs of Staff examined three possible command structures for South Vietnam, i.e., a unified command under the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a joint task force under the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and a subordinate unified command under CINCPAC. Subject to establishment of the agreement and objectives cited in paragraph 2, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend a subordinate unified command under CINCPAC at this time for the following reasons. Current guidance as to the nature of the mission and the magnitude of US forces to be assigned to the new command does not warrant the establishment of a theater of operations type command directly under the Joint Chiefs of Staff. South Vietnam cannot be isolated militarily from the rest of Southeast Asia which is in CINCPAC's area of responsibility. All US and SEATO contingency plans for South Vietnam are inextricably tied, both operationally and geographically, to CINCPAC strategic plans. All resources in the Pacific Area are allocated to CINCPAC.

4. If it is decided to change the command structure in Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs of Staff favor utilizing the existing unified command structure by requiring CINCPAC to organize a subordinate unified command for South Vietnam similar to those already established in Korea, Taiwan and Japan. This command would have Service component commanders and would be over the existing MAAG.

5. As and when the actions in paragraph 2 are complete, and subject to your approval of the proposals contained herein, CINCPAC should be directed to establish without delay a subordinate unified command for South Vietnam in accordance with guidance contained in the Appendix hereto.

6. The monitoring of the activities of the command in Vietnam should be carried out in the normal manner by the Joint Chiefs of Staff utilizing the Director for Operations, Joint Staff.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff.
L. L. Lemnitzer [1]
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

[1] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

Appendix [1]

CONCEPT FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF A SUBORDINATE UNIFIED COMMAND UNITED STATES FORCES, VIETNAM

General

1. Subject to agreement with the Government of Vietnam (GVN), as represented by letters which will be exchanged by President Kennedy and President Diem (copies of which will be made available), the United States will establish a subordinate unified command with Headquarters in Saigon.

2. The objective of this establishment will be to increase US military and economic assistance to the GVN, short of introduction of combat forces, and to increase US participation in the direction and control of Armed Forces of Vietnam (RVNAF) counter-insurgency operations, in order to assist the GVN to contain and eventually to eliminate the Viet Cong. To this end the command will draw together, under single command and control, all those US activities in Vietnam, including intelligence operations, MAAG South Vietnam, and economic aid which are related to the counter-insurgency effort.

3. The command title will be "United States Forces, Vietnam" (USFV), the commander's short title will be "COMUS Vietnam."

Mission and Functional Responsibilities

4. The mission of COMUS Vietnam will be to assist and support the Government of Vietnam in its efforts to prevent the fall of Vietnam to communism, to defeat communist insurgency, and to destroy the Viet Cong.

5. The commander's responsibilities, in discharging the above mission under CINCPAC, will include but not be limited to the following:

a. Exercise operational command over all US military forces in Vietnam, including MAAG South Vietnam.

b. Plan and conduct all US ground, sea and air operations in Vietnam, including US efforts undertaken in support of RVNAF combat operations against the Viet Cong.

c. Exercise full control of all US joint intelligence efforts in Vietnam.

d. Participate with the RVNAF at all appropriate levels in intelligence activities, the development of plans, and the conduct of operations, to the extent necessary to insure the effective employment of RVNAF forces.

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[1] Top Secret.

e. Supervise and direct, through the Chief of US Operations Mission, and other appropriate members of the US Diplomatic Mission, all US economic aid related to the counter-insurgency effort in Vietnam.

f. Function, on a direct and personal basis, as principal US military advisor to the Commander in Chief of the RVNAF.

g. Conduct planning, in coordination with PACOM agencies and other appropriate agencies, for the effective application and employment of US and GVN resources in execution of his mission. Such plans will be subject to approval by CINCPAC.

Command Arrangements and Relationships

5. USFV will be a subordinate unified command with a joint staff. COMUS Vietnam will report directly to CINCPAC. USFV will be comprised of US forces organized into Army, Naval, and Air Force Service components and assigned for the accomplishment of the mission.

6. *Relationship with CINCPAC*

a. COMUS Vietnam will coordinate all relevant activities with CINCPAC, who has over-all responsibility for the Pacific area, including Southeast Asia. As directed by CINCPAC, COMUS Vietnam will communicate and coordinate directly with subordinate agencies of PACOM in areas adjacent to Vietnam.

b. CINCPAC will be responsible to provide, from within PACOM resources, logistic and communications support to meet USFV approved requirements. In addition, and when directed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CINCPAC will make available necessary staff and forces, including air and naval forces operating in direct support, for the execution of the COMUS Vietnam mission.

7. *Relationship with the US Ambassador, Vietnam*

The status of COMUS Vietnam will be co-equal with that of the US Ambassador. In this connection reference is made to a letter from the President to all Ambassadors, dated 2[9] May 1961, which is pertinent to this relationship (copy attached as Annex hereto).[1]

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[1] Not printed. On the copy of this letter attached to the source text, the following paragraph has a line drawn next to it in the margin:

"Now one word about your relations to the military. As you know, the United States Diplomatic Mission includes Service Attaches, Military Assistance Advisory Group and other Military components attached to the Mission. It does not, however, include United States military forces operating in the field where such forces are under the command of a United States area military commander. The line of authority to these forces runs from me to the Secretary of Defense, to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington and to the area commander in the field."

272. National Security Action Memorandum No. 111[1]

Washington, November 22, 1961

TO

The Secretary of State

SUBJECT

First Phase of Viet-Nam Program

The President has authorized the Secretary of State to instruct our Ambassador to Viet-Nam to inform President Diem as follows:

1. The U.S. Government is prepared to join the Viet-Nam Government in a sharply increased joint effort to avoid a further deterioration in the situation in South Viet-Nam.

2. This joint effort requires undertakings by both Governments as outlined below:

a. On its part the U.S. would immediately undertake the following actions in support of the GVN:

(1) Provide increased air lift to the GVN forces, including helicopters, light aviation, and transport aircraft, manned to the extent necessary by United States uniformed personnel and under United States operational control.

(2) Provide such additional equipment and United States uniformed personnel as may be necessary for air reconnaissance, photography, instruction in and execution of air-ground support techniques, and for special intelligence.

(3) Provide the GVN with small craft, including such United States uniformed advisers and operating personnel as may be necessary for operations in effecting surveillance and control over coastal waters and inland waterways.

(4) Provide expedited training and equipping of the civil guard and the self-defense corps with the objective of relieving the regular Army of static missions and freeing it for mobile offensive operations.

(5) Provide such personnel and equipment as may be necessary to improve the military-political intelligence system beginning at the provincial level and extending upward through the Government and the armed forces to the Central Intelligence Organization.

(6) Provide such new terms of reference, reorganization and additional personnel for United States military forces as are required for increased United States military assistance in the operational collaboration with the GVN and operational direc-

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[1] Source: Department of State, S/S-NSC Files: Lot 72 D 316, NSAMs. A note on the source text indicates that information copies were sent to the Secretary of Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, and General Taylor. Printed also in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, pp. 419–421, and in *Declassified Documents, 1979*, p. 107A.

tion of U.S. forces and to carry out the other increased responsibilities which accrue to the U.S. military authorities under these recommendations.

(7) Provide such increased economic aid as may be required to permit the GVN to pursue a vigorous flood relief and rehabilitation program, to supply material in support of the security efforts, and to give priority to projects in support of this expanded counter-insurgency program. (This could include increases in military pay, a full supply of a wide range of materials such as food, medical supplies, transportation equipment, communications equipment, and any other items where material help could assist the GVN in winning the war against the Viet Cong.)

(8) Encourage and support (including financial support) a request by the GVN to the FAO or any other appropriate international organization for multilateral assistance in the relief and rehabilitation of the flood area.

(9) Provide individual administrators and advisers for the Governmental machinery of South Viet Nam in types and numbers to be agreed upon by the two Governments.

(10) Provide personnel for a joint survey with the GVN of conditions in each of the provinces to assess the social, political, intelligence, and military factors bearing on the prosecution of the counter-insurgency program in order to reach a common estimate of these factors and a common determination of how to deal with them.

b. On its part, the GVN would initiate the following actions:

(1) Prompt and appropriate legislative and administrative action to put the nation on a wartime footing to mobilize its entire resources. (This would include a decentralization and broadening of the Government so as to realize the full potential of all non-Communist elements in the country willing to contribute to the common struggle.)

(2) The vitalization of appropriate Governmental wartime agencies with adequate authority to perform their functions effectively.

(3) Overhaul of the military establishment and command structure so as to create an effective military organization for the prosecution of the war and assure a mobile offensive capability for the Army.

McGeorge Bundy

273. Memorandum From the Counselor of Embassy in Vietnam (Mendenhall) to the Public Affairs Officer in Vietnam (Anspacher) [1]

Saigon, November 22, 1961.

SUBJECT

Proposals for Improving the Organization and Broadening the Base of Support of the GVN

Attached is a paper prepared at the Ambassador's request containing certain specific proposals aimed at improving the organization of the GVN and broadening the base of its support among both the educated classes and the masses. Your comments and suggestions on an urgent basis would be appreciated. It would be particularly helpful if MAAG could briefly spell out for inclusion in this paper the specifics of fleshing out the authority of the Field Command over military counterinsurgency operations. [2]

The Ambassador has made no decision about the use of this paper, but he wishes to have it available for possible use during the current negotiations with the GVN in case he is asked by the GVN for specifics in the fields covered by the paper.

[Attachment] [3]

I. Organizational steps

1. Make the national-level Internal Security Council into a fully functioning body meeting at least twice weekly and making all policy decisions relating to the conduct of counterinsurgency planning and operations.

2. Have the national-level Internal Security Council presided over regularly by the Vice President or, in his absence, by the Coordinating Secretary of State for Security.

3. Retain Mr. Nguyen dinh Thuan as Coordinating Secretary of State for Security and appoint him as Secretary of State for National

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 335, GVN—Government of Vietnam 1961. Secret. Initialed by Mendenhall, also addressed to McGarr, Gardiner, and Colby.

[2] No response by MAAG to the paper has been found.

[3] No drafting information is given on the source text, which includes several handwritten interpolations, apparently by Anspacher. Attached to the source text is a memorandum of November 25 from Anspacher to Mendenhall, in which Anspacher said he had no basic disagreement with the paper, but suggested certain textual changes.

Defense, but at same time remove him from all other positions since each position he now holds needs a full-time official.

4. Appoint three Assistant Secretaries of State for National Defense in order to spread the growing burden of work in this mammoth department and broaden the base of the government.

5. Appoint as Secretary of State for the Presidency an official who is a capable administrator who can serve as the implementing executive of the national-level Internal Security Council.

6. Give the Vice President as Coordinating Secretary of State for Economic Development full power and authority over all the economic ministries, requiring them to report to him and leaving to his decision the further questions to be taken up with the Internal Security Council and with the President.

7. Give similar power and authority to the Coordinating Secretary of State for Social and Cultural Affairs.

8. Raise the Direction [*Director*] General of Information to ministry level and replace the incumbent by an official who is experienced in the use of information techniques and who can work with the Minister of Civic Action and the ARVN Psywar Director.

9. Establish internal security councils at the regional, provincial and district levels.

II. Steps to rally support of educated class

1. Appoint to the Cabinet various representatives of a really independent spirit and assure them of a full voice in policy determination and of freedom within broad policy bounds of running their departments. (Names can be supplied on request.) Aim should be to establish a "Cabinet of All the Talents".

2. Find a means of removing Mme Ngo dinh Nhu completely from the public eye in view of the adverse affects (unintentional, to be sure, but, nevertheless, true) of her activities on the political standing of the Government.

3. Release non-Communist political prisoners, and place certain of them in high position as a political gesture to establish national unity in the face of the Communists.

4. Permit all non-Communist political parties to operate and to put up candidates for the 1962 National Assembly elections.

5. Liberalize press censorship permitting criticism of both the government and the personalities therein, but excluding pro-Communist propaganda.

6. Set up a public tribune for the free expression of ideas and criticism within the same limitations as those applied to the press.

7. Establish an independent judiciary with the Ministry of Justice in the hands of a real independent.

8. Give the National Assembly freedom to debate on the measures placed before it. As an example, send back for thorough open debate measures recently adopted at Madame Nhu's instigation re taxi girls and establishment of a women's paramilitary force.

9. To insure that deputies actually represent their constituents, establish requirement applicable to 1962 elections that all candidates must be bona fide residents of the districts in which they present their candidacies.

III. Steps to rally support of masses

1. Appointments to the Cabinet proposed under II, 1, above, can also serve this objective provided representatives of the Cao Dai or Hoa Hao are selected.

2. Increase Diem's personal contact with people through more *informal* trips to countryside, by making himself available at palace to ordinary people, either in groups or individually, by occasionally hearing mass in small church or visiting Buddhist Pagoda, et cetera.

3. Frequent, frank, and down-to-earth talks over radio (at least once a month).

4. Stop emphasizing "sacrifice and discipline" theme in talking to the people and tell them what they are anxious to hear—that better times are coming and that soon they will not be afraid to sleep at night.

5. In Saigon and other cities institute, visit, and dramatize labor-consuming projects for unemployed who have increased considerably as result influx into cities because of insecure conditions in countryside.

6. Initiate and publicize economic and social programs aimed at improving conditions in every village.

7. Proceed to set up provincial councils which President Diem has already promised publicly.

274. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President [1]

Washington, November 24, 1961.

Herewith a comment on Ken Galbraith's letter on Viet-Nam. [2]

On his major point I have no objection, namely, that if Diem does not perform we be prepared to indicate in the proper way to the proper people that we would prefer a successor. The management of that crisis will take great skill to avoid exploitation by the Communists, but I think it not impossible. Contingency planning might quietly begin.

The letter does not grip the problem of infiltration. In 1959 there were 2,000 guerrillas, by a pre-announced and purposeful policy they have been built up to 16,000 (aside from the Communist civil guards) while taking heavy casualties. We know from one transit station, on one route that the infiltration rate was over 400 per month for over six months early in 1961. Virtually the whole of the threat in the plateau is the consequence of recent infiltration, and the build up of the cadres in the south in the last year has been an infiltration job. The proportions have been as we described in our report: about 70% locally recruited, 25% South Vietnamese trained in the north and re-infiltrated, 5% North Vietnamese regulars. But the opening of the second front on the plateau via Laos has probably increased the proportion of infiltrators. The infiltrators have all been trained political cadres and soldiers, the hard core of the Viet Cong effort.

The proportion of guerrillas to regular troops in the war in South Viet-Nam is not abnormal by the experience of previous guerrilla wars. Moreover, none of the recent guerrilla wars has been won with an open frontier; the Greek war was won when the Stalin–Tito fight closed the Yugoslav frontier and fractured the Greek

[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Top Secret. The source text is neither signed nor initialed by Rostow and bears no indication that the President saw the memorandum. Under cover of a brief letter of November 25, Rostow sent to Galbraith a copy of his memorandum to the President and of a memorandum from McGhee to McGeorge Bundy on "Counter Guerrilla Campaigns in Greece, Malaya and the Philippines." (Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Departments and Agencies Series, Department of Defense) In the letter to Galbraith, Rostow wrote: "Whatever we achieve or fail to achieve with respect to Vietnamese administration and politics, we should not kid ourselves that we are up against a serious and major offensive mounted from Hanoi, and it will take hard and purposeful labor on many fronts, both inside and outside South Viet-Nam, to save that area without a war." (*Ibid.*, Meetings and Memos Series, Staff Memos—Rostow—Guerrilla and Unconventional Warfare)

[2] See Document 267.

Communist Party; there was no Communist frontier in Malaya or in the Philippines.

In short, I cannot help conclude that in order to heighten his political argument Ken has grossly underestimated the military significance of the infiltration process; he has ignored Diem's record down to 1959; and he has misinterpreted the brutal basic arithmetic of guerrilla war. (I should like to remind Ken that Desai told Alex J. and me that there is an Indian province on the Burma frontier where they require 35,000 policemen to control 2,500 guerrillas.)[5]

As for Diem. While by the normal standards of an underdeveloped area, his weaknesses would be tolerable—and he did well down to 1959—he has four major weaknesses in terms of the crisis he confronts. First, he cannot protect his peasants. Second, the intellectuals are affronted by his dictatorial political style. Third, the army, the civil servants, and even his ministers are frustrated by his administrative style. Fourth, he lacks the ability to communicate and to identify with the mass of the people—a gift which even Sarit and Sihanouk command. Right now the critical problem from our point of view is his administrative weakness. If this can be conquered by a combination of U.S. partnership and pressure, we shall get a lift of confidence which would, among other things, make it more safe to help induce a coup. If he will not perform, I think it proper that we conceive of an alternative.

With respect to American troops, I know of no one who has recommended that American troops take part in sweeps through Vietnamese territory. There are, nevertheless, concrete functions for U.S. forces which might be envisaged if the battle goes badly or if we feel, for other reasons, American troops are necessary to provide a plateglass presence at the 17th parallel and to relieve Vietnamese forces for combat; to take over the protection of towns in the open country (either in the plateau or along the coast), and to relieve Vietnamese troops for combat; to provide assistance in road building and in other engineering and logistic tasks, to help cope with the Viet Cong if they move from their present hit-and-run tactics to open and sustained battle.

The Viet-Nam situation confronts us with the question of whether we shall or shall not accept the mounting of a guerrilla war across a frontier as legitimate. I wish it were not so, but the New Frontier will be measured in history in part on how that challenge was met. No amount of political jiu-jitsu is going to get us off that hook; but—certainly—our stance in dealing with that issue will be

[5] This conversation has not been further identified.

affected significantly by the administrative and political effectiveness of the government in Saigon.[4]

[4] Written at the end of this sentence, apparently in Rostow's hand, is the following: "An issue on which the Taylor Report was by no means silent."

275. Memorandum From the Secretary of State to the President [1]

Washington, November 24, 1961

SUBJECT

Defoliant Operations in Viet-Nam

I concur with the attached memorandum from Mr. Gilpatric on the foregoing subject.[2] The use of defoliant does not violate any rule of international law concerning the conduct of chemical warfare and is an accepted tactic of war. Precedent has been established by the British during the emergency in Malaya in their use of helicopters for destroying crops by chemical spraying.

We will, of course, be the object of an intense Communist "germ warfare" campaign which may be picked up by some neutrals. You will recall that this was the case during the Korean war although the Communist charges had no factual basis whatever.

On the other hand, I am satisfied that successful plant-killing operations in Viet-Nam, carefully coordinated with and incidental to larger operations, can be of substantial assistance in the control and defeat of the Viet Cong.

[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Reports & Memos. Top Secret. A handwritten note on the source text indicates that the "original" was given to Rostow and the "enclosure" to McGeorge Bundy. A draft of the memorandum, prepared by U. Alexis Johnson, was submitted to the Secretary of State for his signature under cover of a memorandum of November 22, in which Johnson wrote:

"The key is not making this an operation in itself but carefully coordinating it with and making it an incidental part of larger operations for resettlement of the Montagnards, the setting up of an effective border control force, and the ability to mount an effective military operation in Zone D. We must also stay away from the term 'chemical warfare' and any connection with the Chemical Corps, and rather talk about 'weed killers'. Defense and the Chemical Corps entirely agree on this." (Department of State, S/S-NSC Files: Lot 72 D 316, NSAMs)

[2] For text, see *Declassified Documents, 1978*, p. 50B.

Carrying out of the operation will be carefully planned and coordinated between State, Defense, USIA, CINCPAC, the Country Team, and the GVN. Detailed plans in this regard have been formulated.

Therefore, I recommend that you approve the undertaking of such operations in accordance with Paragraph 8 (b) of Mr. Gilpatric's memorandum; that is, "to go ahead with a selective and carefully controlled program starting with the clearance of key routes, proceeding thereafter to food denial only if the most careful basis of resettlement and alternative food supply has been created, and holding Zone D and the border areas until we have realistic possibilities of immediate military exploitation."

I also concur in Mr. Gilpatric's recommendation that this should be done only after careful prior consideration and authorization from Washington of the plans developed by CINCPAC and the Country Team. [3]

Dean Rusk [4]

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[3] For the President's approval of the State–Defense proposal on Defoliant Operations, see NSAM No. 115 in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967* Book 11, p. 425.

[4] Printed from a copy that bears this stamped signature.

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276. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, November 24, 1961—8:22 p.m.

678. We are naturally concerned over Nhu's distortions your negotiations with Diem over increased assistance reported Embtel 702. [2] Unfortunately, today's *Washington Evening Star* carries story by Earl Voss that USG has urged Diem "to broaden participation in his Government and has offered him every aid short of combat troops if he does" and "until Diem takes into his Government qualified administrators instead of relying almost exclusively on members of

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11–2461. Confidential; Priority. Drafted by U. Alexis Johnson, cleared with McConaughy, and initialed by Johnson for the Secretary. Repeated information to CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Dated November 24, telegram 702 reported that an editorial in the Saigon newspaper *Thoi Bao*, apparently reflecting the views of Ngo Dinh Nhu, had castigated Nolting's démarche to Diem as an infringement of Vietnamese sovereignty. (*Ibid.*, 611.51K/11–2461)

his own family and circle of close friends, US officials say they cannot be sure increased US aid would be effective in stopping Communist advances". However, story closes with statement that American officials recognize will be difficult for Diem to broaden administration because of shortage of well-trained civil servants.

We realize foregoing story, as well as *Washington Post* interview this morning with Vu Van Thai critical of Diem, will complicate your negotiations. If you feel it necessary, you can assure Diem that no one in USG inspired these stories and we regret their appearance. We certainly have no desire to humiliate Diem. Hope you will be able impress on Diem that we are simply seeking to arrive at broad understanding with him which will permit establishment of effective partnership between us. As you well stated to Thuan, we are interested in substance rather than form and hope Diem will be able quickly to get down to discussion with you of practical details.

Rusk

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277. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, November 25, 1961—noon

704. I learned yesterday of the establishment in Saigon of 2nd ADVON. As explained to me by its commander, Brigadier General Anthis USAF, this headquarters will have operational control over all USAF operational (i.e., non-training) units in Vietnam, including Jungle Jim, AC&W unit, planes due to arrive for spraying operations, etc. It will also have operational control over certain USAF units in Thailand. It is my further understanding that, while General Anthis will concurrently be head of Air Force section of MAAG, as Commander 2nd ADVON he will have separate staff and will report directly to 13 Air Force and thence through PACAF to CINCPAC. Finally, General Anthis tells me that he expects 2nd ADVON has begun operations with skeleton staff established at GVN's Tan-Son-Nhu Air Base.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5o311/11-2561. Top Secret; Niact; Limit Distribution. Repeated to Bangkok and to CINCPAC for PolAd.

I have high regard for General Anthis and in what follows I am not expressing a view regarding military command relationships, and specifically not objecting to establishing this headquarters.

I nevertheless find it incomprehensible that new US military headquarters would be established in this country without consultation with me or with Government of Vietnam. As new headquarters will immediately become known to Vietnamese Government and probably very quickly to press, I have asked General Anthis not to expand activation 2nd ADVON in Vietnam until following has been accomplished:

1. I have been informed that the Department has concurred in establishment of USAF operational headquarters in Vietnam with jurisdiction also over USAF units in Thailand (and possibly eventually elsewhere in SEA).

2. I have received instructions as to relationship of this headquarters to myself, Chief MAAG, and GVN, and as to what may be said publicly about its functions and command relationships. With regard to relationship 2nd ADVON to me, I would in particular wish precise understanding that any combat or quasi-combat operations in Vietnam carried out by elements of this command will be cleared in advance with me.

3. GVN has been consulted and has concurred in establishment of headquarters in Vietnam.

Please instruct urgently.

Nolting

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278. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, November 25, 1961—6 p.m.

708. Embtel 702. [2] I saw President Diem this morning on question of Vietnamese newspaper article reported reftel, and subsequent article along same line in this morning's issue of same paper (*Thoi Bao*). I told him that I had not come to push him on response to our proposals of November 17, although I hoped he would soon be in position to give me his views. I wished specifically to bring to his

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5/11-2561. Secret; Priority; Limit Distribution. Repeated to Bangkok, London, Paris, Vientiane, Phnom Penh, Geneva for FECON, and CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] See footnote 2, Document 276.

attention two articles appearing in one Vietnamese newspaper which were untrue in their implication and obviously damaging to our joint enterprise. Our one hour's conversation was inconclusive, but rather revealing.

Diem said he had just read the articles in question. They did reflect, in his opinion, the latent feelings of most Vietnamese (and, he added most Asians) concerning fancied or real conditions attached to Western aid. He went on to say that, because of this fact, he had not told anyone except Thuan, Ngo Dinh Nhu and Vu Van Mau the content of our proposals of last week. He said he feared the reaction even among his own Cabinet members. I said I thought he misjudged their sentiments. Diem went on to say that newspaper articles in question were not inspired by government and could not have been based on knowledge of US proposals (except that obtained from US press), but that they expressed a point of view which he felt would be widespread if our proposals were known. He speculated that articles in part reaction to US press (mentioned in particular Rose's story in *Time* and Elegant's story in *Newsweek*), which he said indicated that US would have to "take charge" if Vietnam were to be saved. He mentioned in this connection, and read from, an article in *Hong Kong Observer* of November 8. I said I would not argue the point of whether or not Vietnamese articles in question were [garble], but that I wished to point out frankly that line taken in them had certain clear resemblances to what I had understood to be Mr. Ngo Dinh Nhu's views expressed in recent conversation with correspondent of *Christian Science Monitor*. Beyond that, I wanted to make point that our difficult and complex problem of establishing a more effective joint partnership to win the war here could only be complicated, and perhaps be made impossible, by a continuation of emotional, incorrect, and damaging line in newspapers. Diem concurred in this, but insisted that misrepresentations of his government in our own press could not but provoke nationalistic rejoinders from newspapers in Vietnam. He did not offer, nor did I press him, to issue any countervailing release: but I believe our conversation may help dampen down this foolish and dangerous business.

Throughout this discussion, Diem continued to make references to the quid pro quo aspects of our proposals, claiming that they played right into the hands of the Communists. He argued that we are pressing him to give a monopoly on nationalism to the Communists. I told him that this was the exact opposite of our aim; that we were not seeking quid pro quo as such, but were definitely seeking a structure of government in Vietnam, under his leadership, which could bear the weight of increased US assistance and could channel that assistance effectively; and that we were definitely seeking a basis in US and world opinion to enable US to support his govern-

ment even more heavily. He promised next week to sit down and systematically go over our proposals point by point and to give his considered reaction. I said it would be helpful if he could give his response in due course in written form for clarity and precision. Throughout, Diem stressed that any attempt to "broaden the government" and to "make it more popular" was putting the cart before the horse. Giving security to the people, he said, is the first essential of regaining popular support; it is Communist terror and propaganda which is destroying Vietnamese support of their government; the will exists but can only be demonstrated when the people are free to express it; no additions of "dissidents" to his government would alter this fact. Moreover, he had many independents in the government already, and had had for many years. He cited educators, doctors, and others in this regard.

Without prejudging outcome these negotiations, [I?] think we should be [doing?] some [garble] thinking whether we should not put major stress on efficiency in GVN rather than on more nebulous concept of "political reform". [I?] think we can get a certain measure of improvement in GVN efficiency, which may open up possibility of political liberalization and broadening of political base, with all deliberate speed.

Nolting

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279. Letter From Secretary of State Rusk to the British Ambassador (Ormsby Gore) [1]

Washington, November 25, 1961.

DEAR DAVID: I have considered carefully the points you raised in your note of November 17 [2] referring to our assistance to the Government of Viet-Nam.

I agree with you that we should try to see to it that our efforts to assist the Vietnamese Government do not reduce the chances for a negotiated settlement of the Laotian problem at Geneva. I also agree that we want to avoid any publicity which would be needlessly provocative.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Presidential Correspondence: Lot 66 D 204, Correspondence with UK Officials—Vol. I. Secret. Drafted by McConaughy and C. Chapman of the Vietnam Task Force.

[2] Not printed. (Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series)

At the same time it seems to me that we cannot fail to take immediate action needed to lay a foundation for the prospective program of expanded assistance to Viet-Nam. The contemplated publication of the "Jorden Report" exposing and documenting the North Vietnamese part in the Viet Cong guerrilla war is an essential prelude to the program.

I believe you will concur that the forthcoming publication is factual, objective and probably understated.

With appreciation as always for your comments,

Sincerely,

Dean [3]

[3] Printed from a copy that bears this stamped signature.

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280. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, November 25, 1961—7.10 p.m.

684. Ambassador Chuong called on Secretary 22nd and again 25th [2] in order clear up certain points raised by Chuong, who spoke under instructions.

Following principal points emerged from Chuong's somewhat opaque presentation:

US should not rely on neutrals, particularly GOI and RLG. Greatest threat to free world is in SEA, not Berlin. Last year Communists waged war without danger to themselves to take over Laos. This year it is Viet-Nam. American military assistance is best direct counter to Communists. It should not be spread too thin; should be used not only as foreign aid, but as arm in a war.

Secretary replied we not satisfied with attitude neutrals, but noted we have explained situation to Indians and others. They increasingly concerned. GOI may be helpful through ICC and by its diplomatic efforts, but we should not expect too much. Our total per

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-2561. Secret; Niact. Drafted by Wood, cleared with Cottrell, McConaughy, U. Alexis Johnson, and the Office of the Secretary, initialed by Pezzullo of the Executive Secretariat for the Secretary. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Memoranda of these two conversations are *ibid.*, Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation: Lot 65 D 330, November 1961.

capita aid to India for 12-year period has been $2.00. Our total per capita aid to Viet-Nam for six years has been $100.

Secretary agreed on dangers in SEA and emphasized necessity joint effort. He asked repeatedly, "How do we win the battle?" Ambassador did not reply directly, but several times in his presentation made point US should be tougher with friends and foes alike.

Secretary asked to what extent *Thoi Bao* editorial represented public expression of GVN's real attitude; said it appeared to be most unhelpful prelude to Diem–Nolting talks. Emphasized US had no desire "run" GVN. Our only aim to help GVN with its own war.

Chuong said GVN concerned lest impression be gained there was to be "condominium" in Viet-Nam, but, speaking personally, did not believe editorial represented GVN opinion.

Secretary said editorial (picked up in *Washington Post* today) could create serious public opinion problem in US. Emphasized that in Greece and Korea when the question was that of winning battle, problem of sovereignty did not arise.

Ambassador asked if US had suggested specific steps which might have caused editorial and mentioned Diem sensitive on question bringing exiled political elements into GVN. Secretary replied that we had simply asked for GVN views on how it could get broader support, perhaps there were elements in Viet-Nam, now on sidelines, who might throw themselves behind GVN in its struggle.

FYI. Ambassador Nolting may cite Secretary's remarks as needed in conversations with GVN. End FYI.

Rusk

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281. Editorial Note

On Sunday, November 26, the White House announced a major reorganization of the Department of State. Among the changes were the appointment of George Ball as Under Secretary of State to replace Chester Bowles; W. Averell Harriman as Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs to replace Walter McConaughy; George McGhee as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs to replace Ball; Brooks Hays as the President's Special Assistant; and Frederick Dutton as Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations to replace Hays. The President subsequently named Bowles as his Special Representative and Adviser on African, Asian, and

Latin American Affairs and Walt W. Rostow as Counselor and Chairman of the Department of State's Policy Planning Council to replace McGhee. Regarding the background of Department of State reorganization, see Bowles, *Promises to Keep*, pages 352–367; Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, pages 437–447; and Sorenson, *Kennedy*, pages 287–290. See also the transcripts of interviews with Chester Bowles, February 2, 1965, pages 38–46, and Walt W. Rostow, April 11, 1964, pages 113–114, at the Kennedy Library.

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282. Telegram From the Embassy in India to the Department of State[1]

New Delhi, November 26, 1961—5 p.m.

1501. Embtel 1500.[2] . . . Hanoi had asked GOI if they could send Education Minister Tacha (phonetic spelling) to New Delhi for confidential talks with GOI on VN situation and threat to peace there. . . .

. . . . . .

Unless there is penetrating and non-routine reason to contrary, I think I might see Hanoi representative if and when he comes to New Delhi, and with appropriate discretion hear what he has to say and indicate that while US and GVN are not menacing and do not intend menace DRV we are serious in determination maintain independence SVN. Indians doubtless willing put forward idea of meeting as their suggestion.

Galbraith

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-2661. Secret; Priority; Limit Distribution. Repeated to Saigon and to Geneva for Harriman.

[2] In telegram 1500, November 26, Galbraith summarized his discussion that day regarding the question of Vietnam and particularly the ICC investigation of the Nam assassination. Galbraith observed that comments added little to the picture that the Department of State already had of the Indian Government's views. (*Ibid.*)

283. Memorandum From the Under Secretary-Designate for Political Affairs (McGhee) to the Secretary of State [1]

Washington, November 27, 1961.

SUBJECT

Vietnam

I have read Mr. Chayes' memorandum to you of November 16 on this subject. [2]

There is one consideration bearing on the introduction of substantial US combat forces into Vietnam which is not mentioned in that memorandum and which seems to me worth noting.

Domestic US dissatisfaction with what would surely be the prolonged involvement of American soldiers in these indecisive anti-guerrilla operations would mount and give rise to growing demands that we attack the source of the aggression in North Vietnam.

If we resisted these pressures, they would build up and eventually spill over into across-the-board criticism of our foreign policy, which would make it increasingly difficult to conduct that policy with moderation and good sense. We would be back in the atmosphere of Korea 1950–53—only more so.

If we gave in to these pressures and attacked North Vietnam, we would be propelled into a widening conflict which might be hard to terminate short of all-out struggle with Peiping.

In short, once we committed combat troops to Vietnam we would tend to lose control of subsequent events—either in that theater or more generally—by reason of the popular reactions that our continued involvement would likely trigger.

George C. McGhee [3]

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[1] Source: Department of State, S/P Files: Lot 67 D 548, HO Chron: Secret.

[2] Document 261.

[3] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

284. Memorandum From the President's Military Representative (Taylor) to the President [1]

Washington, November 27, 1961.

SUBJECT

Possible Command Relationships in South Vietnam

1. Considerable discussion is taking place over the kind of organization required in South Vietnam to administer the accelerated U.S. program there. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have had several meetings on the subject and State is also studying the matter. The following are a few observations on the problem advanced before you receive final recommendations from your advisors, based upon the kinds of government activities which will take place in South Vietnam.

2. *Kinds of Business.* Under the pending program the United States will have business of the following types to accommodate within the State/Defense organization in South Vietnam: a. Embassy business; b. USOM business; c. MAAG business; d. Military headquarters business to include the command of U.S. operational units and military planning with the forces of South Vietnam with U.S. contingency forces, and with SEATO forces; e. Intelligence production and evaluation for U.S. purposes.

3. *Channels of Responsibility.* The Embassy and USOM types of business are clearly the prerogative of the State Department under the direction of the senior State representative in South Vietnam. The responsibility for the MAAG can be channeled as at present through the Ambassador with a technical channel of communication open to Defense. This channel may or may not pass through CINCPAC. The military headquarters type of business should not pass through the Ambassador, but should go directly to Defense, either through or bypassing CINCPAC. Military intelligence should be immediately available to the senior military representative, whereas the Ambassador should receive integrated intelligence from all sources.

4. *Possible Command Relationships.* There are three general models which may be considered for Vietnam. The present (normal) model, the Berlin model, or the Korean model.

a. *Normal model.* The present relationship could be retained with rather simple modification. The Chief of the MAAG could be made

[1] Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-185-69. Secret. An attached note indicates that copies were sent to Rusk, McNamara, U. Alexis Johnson, Lemnitzer, Bundy (apparently McGeorge), and Rostow.

concurrently the Commander of the U.S. military units assigned to South Vietnam. The charter of the MAAG could be expanded to cover the additional functions beyond those presently assigned. For military matters pertaining to the conduct of the anti-Viet Cong operations, the Chief, MAAG could be authorized direct communication to the Department of Defense, either through CINCPAC or direct. A joint U.S. intelligence organization should report to the Ambassador, while a joint U.S.–JCS military intelligence should be directly available to MAAG.

b. *Berlin model.* Following the original Berlin USCOB (U.S. Commander Berlin) model there could be a senior U.S. officer in South Vietnam, presumably of 4-star rank, who would represent concurrently the Department of State and the Department of Defense. His principal subordinates would be a chargé d'affaires for embassy business and a military commander to look after the MAAG and Military Headquarters business. The intelligence system would report to him.

c. *Korean model.* This would be the pattern of relationships appropriate to an active or potential theater of war. Embassy/USOM business would be conducted by the Ambassador reporting directly to the Secretary of State. Military business to include MAAG affairs would be the responsibility of a senior Military Commander reporting to the Department of Defense, either through or bypassing CINCPAC. The relationship between the Ambassador and the Military Commander would be one of liaison. Intelligence would be handled as under the normal model (subparagraph a above).

5. The simplest way to proceed in Vietnam for the present would be to stay with the normal model as outlined above. The adoption of either the Berlin or the Korean model proclaims a significant change in the U.S. attitude which should be confirmed by the program which we adopt for South Vietnam. As long as that program is essentially an intensification of past actions, it would be at a minimum inconsistent to set up a command structure such as the Berlin or Korean model which suggests that we are clearing the boards for a show-down—until that is indeed the case.

6. For the time being I would stay with the normal model until our program changes or the model proves inadequate. Meantime, there is work to be done in Washington to tighten up the steering apparatus and to delineate responsibilities here. State, Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff are all working on this matter.

Maxwell D. Taylor [2]

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[2] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

285. Notes of a Meeting, The White House, Washington, November 27, 1961, 5:30 p.m. [1]

Rusk: prob. of American impatience is involved in VN. Gen. Choi [*Chau*?] commented that many in VN who revere Ho Chi Minh & hate French and all Westerners. Diem is having great trouble staying in power. We are trying to find out if a job can be done—Diem fears we are trying to take over VN. Controlled VN press is pushing this line.

Johnson summarized where we are now. Talks began on 17 Nov. Diem worried over comment in message to Diem [2] "we expect to share in decision making in security mil. pol. & ec. field." Thuan felt Diem could not accept it publicly. Diem could not accept sweeping reorg. of govt. Diem felt security came before reorg. of govt.

SecState—VN Amb. conversation—expressed concern over press items etc. re—and rebutted US failures. [3]

Lansdale—Diem fears we are trying to do what French did by putting key officials in VN conferences. State proposal is to send Lansdale out as an "explainer" of US position.

SecDef suggested that Nolting come back & report if next talks are negative.

Jorden report is being printed—will be finished by 6 Dec. Question is—should we release it if next round of talks is negative.

Rostow considers joint survey of Corps Areas *is extremely* important.

Hamilton explained ec. aid proposals—Diem not yet informed—Nolting is armed.

Meeting with Pres.

Rusk reviewed previous comments.

Pres. asked Lansdale if our program made sense.

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Lemnitzer Papers, L-217-71. Top Secret. Handwritten by Lemnitzer. According to the source text, the following people were present: Rusk, Johnson, McNamara, Lemnitzer, Taylor, William Bundy, Rostow, McGeorge Bundy, Hamilton, and Lansdale. Neither Lemnitzer's nor Taylor's Appointment Books at the National Defense University lists the participants at the meeting. Rusk's Appointment Book lists as participants the President, Rusk, McNamara, Lemnitzer, Taylor, Johnson, Bell, Rostow, Hamilton, and Bundy (without specifying William or McGeorge). (Johnson Library, Rusk Appointment Books) The President's log indicates that the meeting was off the record and was attended by the President, Rusk, U. Alexis Johnson, McNamara, William Bundy, Lemnitzer, Lansdale, Hamilton, Dulles, Taylor, Rostow, and McGeorge Bundy. (Kennedy Library, JFK Logs) The source text seems to indicate that the President joined the meeting in progress.

[2] Apparently a reference to telegram 319, see footnote 2, Document 257.

[3] See Document 280.

Lansdale—Yes, but there is an opportunity for misunderstanding which should be cleared up.

P—what about Jorden report?

SecState—being printed but no dist. until new talk with Diem.

P—when policy is decided people on spot must support it or get out. There must be whole-hearted support.

Johnson & Rostow will redraft instr. to.

P—who will head it up in Defense?

Sec—myself & L.

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286. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, November 27, 1961—8:28 p.m.

693. Embtels 678, 687, 708. [2] As seen from here, there are two immediate and essential requirements in situation:

1. Frontal effort on your part to correct Diem's apparent misinterpretation of intentions of our proposals with respect GVN organization; and

2. Early opportunity for a sustained private conversation and full discussion between you and Diem on concrete measures to accomplish objectives of improving GVN image and making GVN more effective instrument for prosecution of war.

With respect first point, it occurs to us that Diem may have taken point one (i) "administrators and advisors" together with para 5 of Deptel 619 [3] as indicating intention on part USG take over much greater degree of control than in fact our intent. While we satisfied you will be able clarify this when you have opportunity for full discussion with Diem, following amplification our thinking may be of some assistance to you. First, point one (i) specifically provides such action only in agreement between two governments and was included to meet Diem's request to Taylor and Rostow for assistance in meeting shortage trained administrators. We certainly have no intention of packing his administration with Americans against his will or "taking over his government".

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-2261. Secret; Niact; Eyes Only. Drafted by U. Alexis Johnson and Rostow, cleared with S/S and initialed by Johnson for the Secretary. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd and Bangkok.

[2] Documents 266, 270, and 278, respectively.

[3] See footnote 2, Document 257.

With respect to last sentence para 5 Deptel 619 on "decision-making processes" what we have in mind is that, in operations directly related to the security situation, partnership will be so close that one party will not take decisions or actions affecting the other without full and frank prior consultation. This was spirit in which proposition in para 5 put forward. We think it probably fruitless to argue or engage in recrimination over generalities and that important point is to discuss specifics, drawing from Diem if possible his own suggestions and, to extent necessary, building on that base.

With respect second point, paras 2 a, b, and c and para 5 of Deptel 619 are considered here only as broad guides on which we rely on you and Country Team to translate in your negotiations into such specific measures as you consider effective and practical. Seen from here, crucial elements appear to be:

a. Follow through on intelligence reform and collaboration;
b. Prompt conduct day to day security business through Cabinet or Internal Security Council;
c. Clarification of military command channels;
d. Prompt follow-through on Thuan's suggestion of security survey in three corps area;
e. Constitution effective frontier ranger force.

In addition we believe it essential for Diem to make moves which would, especially for international and American public opinion, symbolize the fact that bulk of Viet-Namese people—not merely "Diem people"—desire to maintain their independence. How this can best be done is not possible to specify in detail from here but it difficult to overemphasize its importance from Diem's point of view as well as our own. However, might it not be possible for Diem to put a friendly labor leader into some government position, release some political prisoners on selective basis, or to form or give increased substance to public consultative bodies?

We would hope you would be able arrange with Diem for full day or even two at some secluded spot for really full discussion. Diem's dilatoriness in entering into such discussion is giving impression here of lack of sense of urgency on his part.

If your discussion with Diem is clearly not satisfactory it is desired that you promptly return to Washington for full consultation with respect our future course. You authorized in your discretion so inform Diem.

Rusk

287. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, November 27, 1961—8:32 p.m.

694. Eyes only for Ambassador. Re Embtel 704.[2] Joint State–Defense message.

1. As President's representative you have responsibility for and authority over all U.S. operations in Viet-Nam, over Viet-Nam and originating in Viet-Nam. No public information should be volunteered on ADVON. All questions on this and other matters pertaining to stepped-up U.S. military activity should be referred to you or your authorized representative.

2. CINCPAC has directed Chief MAAG and General Anthis to explain fully to you the status of Chief Air Force Section MAAG.[3] Establishment of a new U.S. military command and headquarters in SEA has not been authorized. Responsibilities and functions of 2nd ADVON, as distinct from Chief, Air Section, MAAG are still under study at CINCPAC, and remain undetermined pending prerequisite high level Washington decisions. Concept generally envisions that 2nd ADVON could provide for an overall commander of scattered PACAF detachments already in place. Advice, training and logistic support to RVNAF heretofore supplied by AF Section, MAAG continues as responsibility Chief, MAAG and General Anthis' assignment as Chief, Air Force Section, MAAG/does not change this.

3. Request you advise whether explanation provided by Chief, MAAG and General Anthis satisfactorily resolves your questions.[4]

Rusk

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.56311/11-2561. Top Secret; Priority. Drafted by Wood; cleared with William Bundy, U. Alexis Johnson, McConaughy, and Cottrell, and initialed by McConaughy for the Secretary. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Document 277.

[3] Felt's instructions to this effect are in telegram 252015Z, November 25. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.56311/11-2561)

[4] In telegram 722, November 28, Nolting reported that he had just received telegram 694 and that the matter was "satisfactorily resolved." (*Ibid.*, 751K.00/11-2861)

288. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, November 28, 1961—7:37 p.m.

698. State–Defense–USIA. Supersedes all previous messages.

Do not give other than routine cooperation to correspondents on coverage current military activities in Vietnam. No comment at all on classified activities.

Rusk

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-2861. Confidential; Niact. Drafted by Tubby, cleared by Tubby with Sylvester (Defense), Wilson (USIA), Salinger (White House), and Heavner, and signed by Tubby for the Secretary.

289. Telegram From the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Felt), and the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (McGarr) [1]

Washington, November 28, 1961.

Def 906345. Personal for Felt and McGarr from McNamara. Situation in Vietnam obviously causing great concern here. I have consulted with JCS on creating continuous personal contact to review progress and see what more we can do within framework present policy. For this purpose I would like to set up a first meeting at HQ, PACOM with CINCPAC, CH MAAG SVN and the Chiefs of his air and naval sections just after NATO meeting in Paris. I would have with me General Lemnitzer, possibly General Taylor, Deputy Assistant Secretary Bundy/ISA, Brig/Gen Brown, and will arrive Hawaii 1530Z 16 Dec.

Political uncertainty of Diem's position and doubts as to his willingness to take steps to make his government more effective must not prevent us from going ahead full blast (without publicity,

[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Files: FRC 71 A 3470, South Vietnam 1961—Taylor Recommendations. Top Secret; Priority. Time of transmission is not indicated on the source text. William Bundy's draft of this telegram, which differs only slightly from the final version as sent, is in Department of State, Bundy Files, 1961 Chron.

until political discussions are completed) on all possible actions short of large scale introduction of US combat forces. Timing of putting these actions visibly into effect in Vietnam will be affected by political development, but we cannot let this slow down our making all necessary preparations and movements. This is philosophy behind series of decisions reached by me yesterday with JCS and being communicated to you separately. [2]

Fundamentally, we must adjust ourselves to a perennially unclear political framework and to a policy that for overall national reasons sets limits on military action. However, that policy already gives us considerable scope, and I will do my utmost to get authority for any new ideas you may suggest which are not now covered. What we must do is wring the last ounce out of present possibilities and I feel that we have sometimes been slow, both here at DOD and in the field, in devising and carrying out feasible actions. Cost considerations particularly should be secondary in your search for new approaches.

Re Diem's position, President yesterday [3] emphasized importance all US personnel avoiding criticism his regime outside official channels. Recent adverse publicity making job much more difficult both domestically and in achieving a better partnership. Please stress this within your commands.

December 16 meeting should be intense one-day session. I have in mind later meetings at about monthly intervals.

[1] This message has not been found.
[3] See Document 285.

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290. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in India [1]

Washington, November 28, 1961—8:41 p.m.

1837. For Ambassador. Re Embtel 1501 to Dept, rptd 40 to Saigon, 42 to Geneva. [2] Believe DRV Minister whom Hanoi proposing send New Delhi is DRV Minister Health Pham Ngoc Thach.

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-2861. Secret; Priority. Drafted by Wood, Heavner, and Horgan, cleared with Anderson (SEA) and Weil (SOA), and initialed by Weil for the Secretary. Repeated to Saigon, Geneva for FECON, and USUN.
[2] Document 282.

Thach now in Djakarta (as personal envoy Ho Chi Minh) to outline DRV view VN situation. Thach's travels plus DRV complaint to UN add up to major DRV effort counter forthcoming Jorden report, brand US assistance GVN as aggression. DRV diplomatic offensive underscores importance keeping Indians informed true situation SVN.

Dept believes any meeting between you and Hanoi envoy would have bad effect Saigon. Diem and many influential Vietnamese seriously concerned US may seek negotiate Viet-Nam settlement which would result ultimate Communist control SVN. Since it is our policy give full support to GVN we must avoid any move that might appear, or which DRV propaganda could cause to appear, as prelude to US reduction its commitments to Viet-Nam.

While Dept believes it unwise for you see Thach, it might be useful for Desai to convey our views to him. You may at discretion remind Desai salient points US position as explained to him in Washington, i.e. sole US role in Viet-Nam is to assist that country defend its independence. You might also point out that expression Indian concern re VC terror tactics (reference to Nam case, attacks malaria teams, schools) could have salutary effect, particularly if Indian officials indicate they well aware of DRV direction VC.

Rusk

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291. Memorandum From the Director of Intelligence and Research (Hilsman) to the Secretary of State [1]

Washington, November 28, 1961.

Intelligence Note: Coup Plotting in South Vietnam

Two reliable reports indicate that top south Vietnamese military leaders may be plotting a coup against President Diem. These are the first reports of coup plotting since the flurry of reports last month just prior to Gen. Maxwell Taylor's visit to Saigon. Last month's

[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Reports & Memos Secret. Attached to a brief transmittal memorandum of November 29, from Battle to McGeorge Bundy. A handwritten note on the transmittal memorandum from Bromley Smith to Robert Johnson indicates that Taylor also had a copy of Hilsman's memorandum.

reports, however, were rather vague, of doubtful reliability, and failed to cite names of individuals involved.

Generals Critical. On November 24, Maj. Gen. Duong Van Minh, Commanding General of the Army Field Command, was unprecedentedly critical of the Diem government in his comments to the US Army Attaché. He referred to Diem's reorganizational moves within the military establishment as being highly inadequate and nothing more than "shams" to fool the Americans and evidenced acute concern over interference by Diem and his family in military operations. Gen. Minh stated that the situation was extremely grave, that the next few months could well be decisive, and urged the US to take a firm stand with Diem. Brig. Gen. Le Van Kim, a deputy under Minh and long outspoken in his criticism of Diem's leadership, was present and obviously agreed with Minh's comments.

The following day, Col. Pham Van Dong, Deputy Commander of the 3rd Army Corps, informed the US Army Attaché that he had discussed "coup possibilities" with Brig. Gen. Le Van Nghiem, Commander of the 3rd Army Corps, and the latter replied that "we will wait and see how things go before we take sides." Dong also told our Attaché that "something must and will be done very soon, possibly by December 1."

Growing Disgust With the Nhus. The activities and influence of Ngo Dinh Nhu, Diem's brother and political adviser, and of Madam Nhu continue to be major issues raised by Diem's critics. Gen. Minh, for example, stated that he considers Diem to be a puppet of Nhu, while Col. Dong said that Nhu has his own plans for taking control of the government. Most of Diem critics in government and even some of his supporters, moreover, blame Nhu for the anti-US press campaign.

Heightened Sense of Urgency Within Government. Since last month military and civilian leaders have urgently voiced to Americans their views that Diem must move quickly to reorganize the government, delegate responsibility, and utilize more effectively the existing resources for fighting the Communists. This urgency coincided with the Taylor mission, and a number of officials even recommended that the US pressure Diem to take the necessary steps. A number of Vietnamese abroad, including Vu Van Thai, formerly Director General of the Budget and Foreign Aid, also have been sharply critical of Diem and have urged a firm US position. The recent anti-US statements by the Saigon press may have convinced Diem's critics that Diem will not accept US recommendations and that they should therefore act on their own to alter the situation.

Coup Plotters May See Shift in US Policy. Some military and civilian officials may have also concluded that the Saigon press attacks have weakened US support of Diem, and their comments to the Army

Attaché may be designed to elicit such information. Their estimate of US intentions could strongly influence a decision to undertake a coup.

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292. Paper Prepared by Robert H. Johnson of the National Security Council Staff [1]

Washington, November 28, 1961.

POSSIBLE CONTINGENCIES IN VIET NAM

Alternative Situations

I. As a result of Nolting's new efforts, Diem accepts the conditions we have laid down.

II. Diem does not accept the conditions and one of the following occurs:

A. No coup attempt, or, if there is one, it is defeated by Diem.

B. A coup led by experienced ARVN officers which might put Tho or Thuan at the head of the government.

C. A coup led by Nhu which uses Can Lao members of the ARVN officer corps as front men.

D. A coup which fails to put any single individual or group in charge, but results in a continuing struggle for power.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-2361. Top Secret; Limited Distribution. A copy of this paper was attached to a memorandum of November 30 from Bagley to Taylor, which reads:

"1. The information which follows, and is attached, refers to the current planning for political contingencies in South Viet-Nam, specifically to coup possibilities.

"2. In the past two months, State has forwarded, on a very closely held basis, a letter to Ambassador Nolting outlining possible alternatives to Diem who the US might support. In response to the events of the past two weeks, State is now reviewing the situation. A new letter is being drafted which in present form identifies Tho and Thuan as possible new heads of state, lays down the premise that political exiles not be supported, and develops certain foreseeable coup situations. (This information is secondhand and while accurate may not be complete.)

"3. As a related study, and to expand on the more narrow State effort, Bob Johnson prepared a paper on coups. This is attached; a copy has been sent to Alexis Johnson. It lays out possible situations and develops certain tentative conclusions. In doing so, an argument is made that Amb. Nolting should stay in Saigon immediately following any negative answer from Diem.

"I suggest you read the attached paper in its entirety." (National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-127-69) The letter to Nolting which Bagley referred to is Document 181.

Like all such lists, the above list does not exhaust the possible permutations. In particular, various intermediate situations are possible. Some of these are covered in the discussion below.

Discussion

Alternative I: If this occurs, our problems will by no means be solved. It is quite possible that we will get a formal agreement from Diem which he will then fail to carry out. Indeed, he may offer us such formal assurances for the precise purpose of heading off a coup and giving him time to organize to prevent such a coup. This time we cannot give Diem nearly as much time to perform as we have given him in the past. If it is evident within the following month or six weeks that he is not going to perform we will have to consider whether we should make an effort to have him replaced. If it becomes evident that he is buying time in order to build his defenses against a coup, we will have to move even more quickly.

Alternative II–A: If this occurs it will probably be because of one or a combination of three circumstances: (a) the military lacks the will and determination to mount a coup; (b) the U.S. fails to give a clear signal that it will support a coup group; or (c) Diem manages to find sufficient forces loyal to him to prevent coup plans from succeeding. This kind of a situation could be most difficult of all. We would be in a stand-off in our relations. The worst variant (though perhaps an unlikely one) would be one where we had become identified with a coup attempt that had failed. Our relations with Diem would then be at almost dead end. Under other variants, not including U.S. identification with an unsuccessful coup effort, we would have to consider such possibilities as simply withdrawing our offer of additional aid and attempting to revert to the status quo ante or attempting to develop a different kind of package which we would attempt to sell to Diem.

Alternative II–B: This would be the best of the alternative coup possibilities. What should be the U.S. role in bringing about such a state of affairs? The evidence suggests that all we will probably have to do to ensure that a coup takes place is to indicate clearly, but in an indirect fashion, that we will support a coup effort. In giving such indication, we might be well advised to indicate that we would much prefer an arrangement which provided for the constitutional succession of Vice President Tho.

What we do need to do positively in such a situation is to avoid the possibility that either alternative situation II–C or II–D would occur. Our control over troop dispositions which might bring Can Lao-officered units into Saigon to prevent a coup would be very limited. However, we should be able to do something about insuring

that Vice President Tho is protected against assassination. Nhu would probably make him the first target of any move since he is the obvious successor. Nhu has already done his utmost to downgrade him.

Another possible danger that must be guarded against is that the Communists will exploit the situation to create confusion. We ought to have prepared now a very full appreciation of just how much trouble the Communists could create. My own belief is that they would not be able to move in and take over militarily. I also believe that it is highly doubtful that they have the capability to insinuate any of their followers into high positions in a coup party. They might exploit a situation of uncertainty (alternative B-D) to produce a period of chaos which would result in an early Communist takeover.

In the light of the above, the U.S. may have relatively little direct role to play. Our most important action will be to make clear that we will go along with a coup.

If this analysis is correct, we would not be well advised to pull our ambassador out and put Lansdale in Saigon if Diem refuses to sign on the dotted line. If we can get the kind of coup we want without evidence of overt U.S. involvement, we shall be better off than if we are clearly identified with a coup group. No matter how unpopular Diem may be and no matter how popular his successors, our identification with the change would be a definite drawback in Viet Nam and in the world at large. No government in a situation like that in Viet Nam is going to remain tremendously popular for very long. Moreover, in the larger arena of our relations with the rest of the world such identification could convert the situation in Viet Nam into one like that in Laos making it appear to be a straight U.S.-Bloc struggle for power with the Vietnamese as mere pawns. Our identification with the change may be an immediate bonus, but a long-term disadvantage. It would also involve a heavy additional commitment of U.S. prestige which may or may not be advantageous. If we send Lansdale when Nolting leaves, the coup will inevitably be viewed as another CIA effort since he is so clearly identifiable in the area.

Nolting himself should stay in Viet Nam long enough to "pass the word". It is most important that it be passed in a way that gives it an authoritative coloration.

I am not altogether convinced that Nolting needs to leave in order to dramatize the breakdown in our relations and the need for change. The situation will be known quickly enough within the GVN without such action. There would be a real advantage in having him there to direct our responses in the event a coup occurs. Unfortunately the DCM is so new to that part of the world that he

would be in great difficulty. If we want to indicate our displeasure we should be able to find other ways to communicate it. Nolting's absence could conceivably deter a coup by the military. To sum up, I believe that, even if we go through with plans to withdraw Nolting, such withdrawal might better be deferred for a time to permit him to have some influence on developments that occur subsequent to his withdrawal.

Because of the disadvantages of U.S. identification, any military moves should be relatively unostentatious. We might, at some crucial stage, let coup leaders know privately that we were prepared to fly in forces, without putting such forces in a publicly visible position off the coast.

Alternative II–C: This alternative would create a worse situation than we have now. Nhu is much less popular than Diem. He would probably run a very repressive regime and would probably be most difficult to deal with. Moreover, if he were in control, the political situation might become even more unstable. There would probably be extensive purges and counter-coup plotting. The likelihood of a coup by Nhu succeeding is probably fairly low because he is so universally disliked. However, the potential role of the Can Lao is difficult to assess. What is more likely is a temporary Nhu success followed by a counter-coup by the experienced military officers. Such a development could produce the situation envisaged in Alternative II–D.

Alternative II–D: A struggle for power could involve any or all of five elements—Diem, the regular ARVN officers, Nhu and the Can Lao, the Communists and the sects (which might be armed by any of the other three). Such a struggle could create a situation most favorable to the Communists. If we should support a coup effort by the officers, it would be most important to assure that it succeeded quickly and cleanly. One of the first objectives would therefore have to be the effective neutralization of Nhu. He would be the most immediate threat.

If there is any serious hitch indicating the possibility of success by the opposition, we may have to move quickly with military force. But couldn't the necessary forces (which would not have to be very large) be kept in the Philippines or some considerable distance offshore and flown into Saigon?

Recommendations

1. We should obtain an intelligence appreciation of possible alternative developments. In order to keep distribution limited, it may be necessary to ask for a CIA appreciation rather than a coordinated estimate. The appreciation should deal with the probable

role of the four principal power groupings (army, Nhu and the Can Lao, the Communists and the sects), and of Diem himself.

2. A high-level limited attendance meeting should discuss U.S. policy in various possible situations at a very early date. We should not wait for the outcome of our latest démarche to have such a discussion. The arguments above are intended to be provocative rather than dogmatic. They are based upon judgments that need to be examined.

Robert H. Johnson [2]

[2] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

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293. Letter From the Secretary of Defense's Assistant for Special Operations (Lansdale) to General Samuel T. Williams [1]

Washington, November 28, 1961.

MON GENERAL—Warm thanks for your letter. [2]

Upon return here, the boss had another crash project for me to work on, [3] so I've been quite apart from most of the follow-through of the Taylor group's reports and activities. I've had to keep one eye cocked on it, but it hasn't been enough—as perhaps you've seen in the press.

One of the conclusions drawn in town, and both Taylor & Rostow say it isn't one of theirs (although I'm suspicious) is that we cannot help the VN win against the VC as long as a dictator (Diem) holds power. So, one of the thoughts being ginned up is that I go over as his personal advisor and, presumably, clobber him from up close. I pointed out that this was a duty without honor and I'd be dammed if I'd do that. [4] Now I'm being asked about you, whether

[1] Source: Hoover Institution Archives, Williams Papers, 1961 Letters. Handwritten by Lansdale.

[2] Not further identified.

[3] Lansdale was asked by Attorney General Robert Kennedy to work on a project relating to Cuba.

[4] In a memorandum to the President of November 23, the President's Naval Aide, Tazewell T. Shepard, wrote, "You wished to be reminded to discuss with Secretary McNamara and General Lemnitzer: (1) Why is Brigadier General Lansdale the only man available?" (Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Bromley Smith Drawer, Memos to the President)

you're free to become involved in VN affairs. I'm not certain if there's a connection between these two things, so this is just a little personal alert.

I do hope there is some sound way of getting you into the act on VN, because the situation there needs the best we have.

Diem has been getting worn out by all the vicious attacks on him. The first evening I was there, he looked really down in the dumps—so I told him to go to bed instead of talking to me. During the next several days, I went to work to keep him up, and he started becoming the fighter we knew of yore. However, these latest attacks on him—seemingly stemming from the Taylor group—apparently really got him down. Also, the wording of some of the U.S. proposals made it look as though the U.S. was going to act the same way the French have. I jumped back into the act long enough last night to try to straighten out this aspect.

The VC war is getting real rough. Your successor seems to be fighting it with memos, with the result that he has lost much of his influence with Diem, Thuan, etc. I urged Thuan to work with him more closely and Thuan pointed to a big stack of papers and said: that's what I got the last time I asked for some help.

A number of our VN army friends have told me that Thuan is a jerk and no good. He and Diem have said much the same about some of their generals. I tried to explain to all that they had to work together in a team and that suffering casualties always creates emotional stress—which is the real basis for any falling out in a situation like theirs.

In a memorandum of November 25 to McNamara, William Bundy wrote, among other things, that McGarr sent two messages through special channels reporting Diem's disappointment that no decision had been reached regarding Lansdale's return. Bundy had gathered from these messages and other indications that McGarr favored Lansdale's return. Bundy himself concluded, "In spite of the importance of Ed's assignment, I think he belongs in Vietnam, where he is of unique value." (Department of State, Bundy Files, 1961 Chron; also printed in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, p. 422)

In a telephone call to Taylor at 12:11 p.m. on November 27, Rusk "suggested getting Lansdale out right away . . . not in lieu of the amb but to brief him and Diem." The conversation continued, "We did have in mind bringing Nolting back if we did not see better response from Diem. T is getting uneasy and hopes the response from Diem would so indicate this. The Sec said but it might be well for L to get out before we get too wrong a response. T is concerned it would be viewed as his being a second amb. The Sec thinks that can be explained. T mentioned getting L from the AG for this and the Sec said it would not be for too long." (Department of State, Rusk Files: Lot 72 D 192, Telephone Calls)

Between midday November 27 and 30, a decision was made not to send Lansdale, for in a memorandum of November 30 to McNamara, McGeorge Bundy wrote that the President's question of why Lansdale was the only man available for Vietnam was "probably moot at the moment." (Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Bromley Smith Drawer, Memos to the President)

I'm afraid that another coup might get ginned up, despite present U.S. attitudes locally against it. If so, it could lead to real disaster.

Incidentally, Diem, Thuan, and the others think highly of Fritz Nolting. Too bad you didn't have someone like him as ambassador while you were there.

We probably will be boosting our help by a lot more men, money, & material. However, what's really lacking is something of the spirit, something of leadership qualities on our part, which would give meaning to our aid. It's pure hell to be on the sidelines and seeing so conventional and unimaginative an approach being tried. About all I can do is continue putting in my two-bits worth every chance I get to add a bit of spark to the concepts. I'm afraid that these aren't always welcome.

Rather than end this on a gloomy downbeat, let's noodle out how to lick the crowd. One of the main problems is here at home, with Washington being only one phase. Do you feel up to entering the fray again—against folks of Durbrow's ilk—but much subtler? I'll see what I can noodle out for a sound place and way to do battle, if you feel up to it.

Warmest and best wishes, as always,

Ed

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294. Central Intelligence Agency Information Report [1]

Washington, November 28, 1961.

. . . Subject: Views of Ngo Dinh Nhu on Vietnamese American relations.

1. On 27 November 1961, Ngo Dinh Nhu, brother and political advisor to President Diem, said that he had called Director General of Information Tran Van Tho that morning and advised him that he thought it improper that the Vietnamese press criticize the American Government. He said he fully understood their annoyance at American press stories of conditions being imposed upon the Vietnamese Government, unfair criticisms, etc. Nhu said that he had told Tho that Vietnamese criticisms of such statements were fair if addressed

[1] Source: USAMHI, Kraemer Papers, VN 61-63. Confidential; Noforn/Continued Control.

to the authors of the statements but not at a friendly government. He stated that this was a matter of simple justice and should not be interpreted as a decision by the Vietnamese Government not to insult the American Government for political reasons. He then added that it is most important that neither the Americans nor the Government of Vietnam (GV) be isolated by Communist propaganda whose primary objective is to isolate the Vietnamese Government from its people and the Americans from their companions in the Free World. . . .

2. Nhu stated that the difficulties between Vietnamese and Americans can be laid at the door of the Free World's lack of any coherent concept of the development of an underdeveloped country toward democracy. He contrasted this with the definite stages by which the Communists view their political program. The Communists view an independent country as moving along a clear path to include the following four states: (a) neutrality, (b) anti Free World, (c) pro Soviet bloc, (d) popular democracy. It is this concept of stages which enables the Communist world to accept with no criticism, conditions or other harassment a country such as Cambodia in the neutral stage, the efforts to create a neutral Laos, and the situation of other underdeveloped countries in Africa and Asia. While the Free World looks toward Laotian neutrality, for instance, as an objective, the Communists are content to consider it as one step toward the eventual goal. This concept of progression toward Communist control also explains the discipline of a Communist party in a country such as Cambodia when instructed to support the government in power.

3. In contrast, the Free World has only one step it expects any underdeveloped country to make. It expects it to move from the stage of underdevelopment to full-blooming democracy in one jump. The impossibility of such an abrupt change, the chaos which ensues when it is attempted and lack of understanding of this fact between the country itself and outside observers all lead to considerable lack of confidence and criticism between the Free World and the underdeveloped country. The greatest need in the Free World today is a clear concept of stages through which underdeveloped countries are expected to progress so that premature expectations of democracy will not destroy confidence between free nations. While this problem applies to Vietnam, it applies with equal force to other underdeveloped countries in Africa and Asia.

4. Nhu stated that one of the first requirements of this progression is a step toward land reform and land resettlement, to give each citizen a plot of land of his own and a feeling of economic security. At the same time, like the tribes of Israel moving through the desert toward the promised land, the flame of future ideal, the Ark of the

Covenant, must be kept in full view at all times. This eventual goal will give cohesion and force to the progress of the underdeveloped country through its necessary stages. In Vietnam this cohesive force is provided by the philosophical underpinnings of the Can Lao party, i.e. personalism, community life and collective improvement. A similar philosophical base must be found in every underdeveloped country moving through its necessary stages.

5. Nhu said that the problem of bringing about [garble] precision of these stages is one which calls for priority effort by the political theorists and thinkers of the best American institutions. Only if such a planned progression is achieved will we be able to avoid in the long term the misunderstandings and criticisms which have marked the press of Vietnam and the United States with regard to each other in recent times.

6. Nhu stated that the Taylor visit and its results reminded him of an incident which brought the delay of the arming and training of the Civil Guard. This occurred in 1956 [?] when Ho Thong Minh, then Minister of Defense, advised General Lawton Collins that President Diem had no support within the army. As a result, he said, the President planned to create a private army in the Civil Guard, which would give him control of the situation. General Collins understandably accepted this statement of a minister of the government and as a result assistance to the Civil Guard was passed to United States Operations Mission (USOM) and Michigan State University (MSU) which did not prepare it to become a paramilitary force for local defense. As a result of this comment by a minister, therefore, the training of the most important arm for anti-guerrilla operations was delayed a number of years. Nhu said that it was quite clear that General Taylor had been exposed to similar comments from very high officials in the government and from outsiders. The results of their criticisms are now being imposed on the President despite their errors. Nhu also said he had the impression that General Taylor's mind was made up before he came to Vietnam, as his investigations were quite limited.

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295. Central Intelligence Agency Information Report [1]

Washington, November 29, 1961.

. . . Subject: Views of President Ngo Dinh Diem.

1. On 27 November 1961, President Ngo Dinh Diem said that the mission of General Maxwell D. Taylor to South Vietnam was somewhat similar to the mission of General Marshall to China. In the latter case, General Marshall insisted that Chiang Kai-shek divide his power with the Liberal Party, which had no authority and represented nothing but a few intellectuals. The American position after the Taylor Mission was completed bears similarities, as it apparently wishes to impose some sort of liberalization or change upon the Government of Vietnam (GVN) which is not suited to the present situation or the Government's structure. Diem said that he had been trying for a long time to build the infra-structure of a democratic system in South Vietnam but that he was faced with two major obstacles, the war being waged by the Vietnamese Communists, and the difficulty of finding loyal and efficient cadres for the GVN.

2. President Diem stated that he was conscious of the demand that "emergency" action be taken and this he had tried to accomplish. When discussing the specifics of "emergency" actions with such political figures as Pham Huy Quat, leader of the Front for National Unity, however, the President found nothing but vague and irrelevant ideas about giving greater freedom propounded. He found that such figures as Dr. Quat actively refused to accept the real "emergency" actions necessary, such as immediate and severe punishment of treason and cowardice in the face of the enemy. He planned in the next few days to establish provincial councils, but these would not be elected in the beginning but would be appointed from non-party people in the area. A similar technique was used in forming the National Economic Council which was nominated by various interest groups. It was delayed by the difficulties of finding labor representatives who were anything but Communist. Meanwhile oppositionists such as Pham Huy Quat were currying favor with potential foreign sponsors instead of helping the country to fight during this period.

3. Another drawback to the Taylor Report recommendations was the experience of the GVN with the Staley Report, which was delivered with great fanfare and indicated that all sorts of additional assistance would be forthcoming. The promised increase in American

[1] Source: USAMHI, Kraemer Papers, VN 61-63. Confidential; Noforn/Continued Control.

support had not materialized to date. Diem stated that he had taken steps to devaluate the recommendations.

4. The Vietnamese newspapers were commenting on the conditions stated in the Taylor Report, according to Diem, and the press revealed the depth of the antagonism of thinking Vietnamese to any conditions which they believed limited GVN sovereignty. Diem knew that his advisers and cabinet members would feel so strongly on this subject that he had not exposed the specifics of the Taylor recommendations to more than one or two individuals. (*Field comment.* Assistant Secretary of National Defense and Secretary of State at the Presidency Nguyen Dinh Thuan stated on 27 November that President Diem's attitude was appropriately described as "frustrated" by the convergence of problems upon him, including what he deemed the unreality of the Taylor conditions; the extreme difficulty in locating appropriate individuals to whom power could be delegated and who would accept it; the pressures of the war; and, the fact that he had carefully consulted his Cabinet, National Assembly members, and other advisers on the desirability of receiving American troops, and now faced a difficult problem in re-orienting them.)

5. President Diem also expressed considerable fury and bafflement at how to handle American press representatives. He realized the importance of the American press influence, but insisted that it should assume responsibility commensurate with its power, and should also realize that the backdrop to the Vietnamese scene being reported is the Vietnamese Communist attack. He complained that if he did not give an interview to a foreign newsman, the latter criticized him for ignoring foreign newsmen, but that if he did give the interview, the reporter used almost nothing told to him and criticized the length of the interview. . . .

6. President Diem said that he intended to go ahead with extra financial expenditures and has instructed Thuan to find the necessary 600 million piasters, of which 40 million would be for Self Defense Corps equipment, 60 million would be to pay village notables, etc.

. . . . . .

296. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, November 29, 1961—6 p.m.

729. Reference: Deptel 693. [2] In somewhat improved atmosphere here, believe cool and unhurried approach is our best bet for success. Diem habitually takes quite a while to react; he likes to take other people's ideas and make them his own, sometimes. I have indications that he is trying to come up with something along lines we suggested, and I think it would be a mistake to rush him.

Definitely think better arrangements to benefit of common cause can be made if we do not become impatient and if I use latitude between my original instructions and reference telegram prudently and in response to his ideas.

Since dictating above, learn from Thuan that Diem wants to see me tomorrow (November 30), after his return from field trip.

Nolting

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11–2961. Secret; Niact; Eyes Only. Repeated to Bangkok and CINCPAC for PolAd.
[2] Document 286.

297. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Burma [1]

Washington, November 29, 1961—9:12 p.m.

301. Following is text, for delivery Prime Minister, of President's reply to U Nu's November 13 letter re Vietnam. [2] Signed original being airpouched:

"Dear Mr. Prime Minister: I am happy to have your letter of November thirteenth expressing your concern over the situation in South Viet-Nam. It is in no sense an intrusion, and I want you to know that I will always welcome your thoughts and counsel. We

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11–1461. Confidential. Repeated to Saigon. Previous drafts of the enclosed letter, one of which bears the handwritten notation "changed by White House 11/27/61," are *ibid.*, 751K.00/11–2261.
[2] Document 248.

share the same objective of maintaining the peace and promoting the well-being of Southeast Asia. I am sure that I need not tell you that the United States has no ambitions for itself in the area; our only desire is that independent countries of the area should be able to maintain their independence, free from threats of force and from externally supported subversion and infiltration. Unhappily, this is not now the case in South Viet-Nam.

"It is good to know that you have expressed to the Government in North Viet-Nam your concern on this point; a continuation of its present course cannot but endanger the peace. Although we are satisfied that the Government of South Viet-Nam is prepared to live peacefully within the Geneva Accords, the authorities in North Viet-Nam have done little to conceal their disregard of those Accords and have openly and systematically fomented efforts aimed at the violent overthrow of the Government in South Viet-Nam. This policy was openly proclaimed in the declaration of the Third Lao Dong Party Congress in Hanoi in September 1960, which called upon its members to 'liberate South Viet-Nam from the ruling yoke of the United States imperialists.' Three months later Hanoi announced the creation of a 'front for liberation of the South.'

"There have been many other public statements in the same vein from Hanoi, and it is clear that there has been established in the South an elaborate guerrilla organization supported, directed and supplied from the North. The October 24, 1961, letter of the Government of Viet-Nam to the International Control Commission [3] set forth in what I am satisfied to be an objective and factual manner detailed information and evidence with respect to the massive infiltration from the North.

"While there may be varying assessments and points of view with respect to the domestic policies of the Government of Viet-Nam, it is the legitimate government of an independent country and the freedom of the people it represents is endangered, I am sure that you would agree that it would be extremely difficult for any government, unaided, to cope with externally supported attacks of the intensity of those now being mounted with increasing crescendo against the Government of South Viet-Nam. I know that your own experience enables you, especially, to appreciate the dangers which are now threatening the Government and people of South Viet-Nam.

"We are gravely concerned not only by the danger they face, but also by the threat which Communist domination imposed from the outside would present to the nations of Southeast Asia. I am sure you will agree that this is a question in which our common interests are deeply involved.

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[3] Not printed. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-861)

"The intention of my Government is to help South Viet-Nam by continuing and considerably increasing the military assistance program which we have been providing. At the same time we will step up economic aid in connection with damage caused by the recent flood.

"In reply to the point raised in your letter, I would like to assure you that we are not sending U.S. combat forces to Viet-Nam. We are profoundly aware of the grave questions which would be involved in such a decision and I earnestly hope that we will not be faced by such an eventuality.

"As to the nature of the crisis in Viet-Nam, we are convinced by extensive and detailed evidence that the increase in internal disorder and the expansion of military operations against the Government are caused by a massive campaign of infiltration, subversion, and terror directed and reinforced from the outside. While this form of aggression is indirect, it is very real.

"I am gratified that you have undertaken to let me have your views on this grave matter and I believe that on most points our views coincide. Certainly as events unfold and as this Government considers future actions to help the people and Government of South Viet-Nam stop the forces which threaten their independence, I shall have in mind your thoughts and welcome counsel.

"Sincerely, John F. Kennedy."

White House and Dept do not plan release text. Suggest you confirm with Burmese our assumption they will not release.

Rusk

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298. Letter From the Ambassador in Vietnam (Nolting) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson) [1]

Saigon, November 30, 1961.

DEAR ALEX: For your information, Senator Ellender paid us a one-day visit on November 29th. He saw all members of Task Force Saigon and received answers to his questionnaire, [2] sent in advance

[1] Source: Department of State, Johnson Files, Official and Classified Letters, Confidential; Official–Informal.

[2] Not further identified.

of his arrival. His general attitude towards our policy, plans, and efforts here was totally negative.

During a long discussion at my home on the evening of his arrival, I tried to give Senator Ellender as candid a picture as I could of what we are trying to do here. Starting from completely different premises, he naturally did not agree with our policy. His premises, as the Department doubtless knows, are:

(1) that the Viet-Cong insurgency here is nothing but a manifestation of discontent with a corrupt regime;
(2) that Communist expansionism from North Viet-Nam, China and Russia has nothing to do with it;
(3) that corruption in the regime is bred by US assistance, and that contention among factions for control of US assistance further corrupts and paralyzes the Government.

I was unable to sway him from these extraordinary views.

On the evening of his arrival, Senator Ellender requested an appointment with President Diem for the next day. After hearing Senator Ellender's views, which he said he intended to give to Diem (whom he said he had seen on every previous visit to Viet-Nam), I decided it would be most unwise in the present circumstances to promote the meeting. I told Senator Ellender that I thought it would be impossible on such short notice to arrange a meeting with President Diem. I further told him that if President Diem had any time, I myself wished to see him on urgent and important business, and that it would be very awkward for me at this juncture to ask Diem to see Senator Ellender. The Senator would not, however, withdraw his request to me to arrange an appointment.

The next day I got in touch with Thuan, telling him that Senator Ellender was in town and wanted to see President Diem, but that in view of the shortness of time and the President's many preoccupations, I would tell Senator Ellender that President Diem was unfortunately unable to see him on such short notice. Thuan agreed and I did so. Senator Ellender was markedly displeased at not being able to see Diem, and said that he was going to write a letter expressing his regret to President Diem, after his departure. I will take care of this angle through Thuan.

I would appreciate it if you would see that the proper persons in the Department are informed of the above, in the event that the matter comes up after Senator Ellender's return to Washington. [3]

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[3] In his reply of December 8, Johnson wrote that Ellender's "views with regard to Viet-Nam are hardly surprising in the light of his well-known views on other areas." Johnson expressed approval of the way Nolting had handled the incident and promised to bring Nolting's letter to the attention of the Bureaus of Congressional Affairs and Far Eastern Affairs. Johnson concluded:

"I want you to know that everyone here is most pleased with the very able way

Best personal regards.
Sincerely,

Frederick E. Nolting, Jr.[4]

that you have succeeded in handling things, in spite of the handicaps of most unhelpful leaks from here. On the latter point, I have made extraordinary efforts to run them down but, as is all too often the case, thus far without positive result." (*Ibid.*)

[4] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

299. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State[1]

Saigon, November 30, 1961—9 p.m.

737. Task Force VN. Regret report that Thompson Mission is badly off rails from standpoint US–UK coordination and that Thompson recommendations to GVN, whatever may be their intrinsic merit, are bound to complicate our task of bringing about essential reforms in GVN military and administrative structure. Position may be retrievable (and we are working at it). But as of now British initiative has introduced knotty problem in our discussions with GVN.

Difficulties with Thompson Mission have been procedural and substantive. Procedurally, problem has been that Thompson has submitted his recommendations to President Diem without prior consultation with US and without real effort to ascertain thrust of our plans or programs for counterinsurgency. This has occurred despite what I considered most precise prior understanding with Ambassador Hohler that advance consultation was essential if two pitfalls were to be avoided: (1) That we should present alternative recommendations to Diem between which he could vacillate without acting on either; and (2) That British would present recommendations which we for one reason or another could not or would not support and which would therefore be sterile (given fact that UK not contributing substantially to anti-VC effort beyond Thompson recommendations). Second procedural point fully agreed with Hohler

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11–3061. Secret; Limit Distribution. Repeated to London and CINCPAC for PolAd.

was that Thompson would strictly limit himself to intelligence and civil aspects of counterinsurgency effort.

Although Hohler does not deny that there was clear understanding on above points—and I have had occasion to remind him of them several times recently—fact is that Thompson has disregarded them. Only defense offered is that General Taylor specifically requested Thompson's views without limitation as to subject matter (I have this only from Hohler)[2] and that as Thompson Mission is accredited to Diem he must respond to latter's requests.

Although British performance is procedurally incorrect, substantively it is far more serious. Thompson has submitted to Diem so-called "outline plan" for clearing delta (Embdes 205, Nov. 20).[3] This paper deals with whole range of anti-guerrilla measures, including all aspects of military. It is an admirable paper from standpoint of presentation and as a statement of concepts of anti-guerrilla operations. We can easily agree with ninety per cent of it and have in fact been pressing same or similar concepts on GVN for many months.

Problem arises in unexpected way. We have been pressing Diem to set up a proper military command structure headed by field command and to delegate authority to it. Diem accepted this most reluctantly six months ago, but has never fully carried through on it, and recently there have been several instances of direct orders from palace to ARVN units without field commands knowledge. Thompson proposal for delta provides that control of operations in that area bypass field command (since chain of command would be from NISC to Combined Third Corps HQ) and operational control would thus in effect be exercised by Diem. This point has obviously not escaped President. Thuan has already informed McGarr that Diem has "accepted" Thompson plan and inquired whether MAAG has any comments on it. Diem has also asked Thompson to submit plan for clearing area north of Saigon.

I do not wish to suggest by above that I consider Diem's reaction to Thompson plan is motivated solely by desire avoid delegation of authority which we have been pressing on him,

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[2] In telegram 717 to Saigon, December 1, Taylor told Nolting that he had informally discussed with Thompson the situation in Vietnam and had expressed "interest in Thompson's views." Taylor said he had been "greatly surprised" to receive from the British Embassy a copy of Thompson's October 27 paper, "Appreciation of Vietnam, November 1961 to April 1962" (not printed). Taylor said that if it seemed useful to Nolting, he might mention to the British Ambassador that Taylor thought Thompson had misunderstood his request and suggested it be forgotten. (*Ibid.*, 751K.00/12-161) In a covering memorandum of December 1 to U. Alexis Johnson with the text of this message, Taylor stated that he was "somewhat disturbed" that "Thompson was using me as a kind of screen for his out-of-channel operations in Saigon." (*Ibid.*)

[3] See Document 237.

although this is without doubt a major factor. Another is very likely a reaction to our approach in current negotiations. Nor do I wish to suggest that we are being doctrinaire in our reaction, which I think is not the case. Fundamentally, problem is that we are convinced that unless we can bring Diem to delegate authority we shall never get effective counterinsurgency effort in this country, no matter what sort of paper plans we may have. Thompson proposal, particularly coming at this juncture, strikes a hard blow at this effort.

A second major substantive difficulty with Thompson plan is proposal that clearance of delta provinces have first priority. In MAAG view first priority is area to north of Saigon—which Thompson had not surveyed at time he submitted his delta plan to Diem.

At meeting with Hohler and Thompson November 29, at which McGarr and Trueheart present, I spoke along above lines very frankly and even bluntly, emphasizing that I feared Thompson plan would be distinct handicap in discussions which I am now carrying on with GVN. I also warned them that if, as I expected, Diem raised Thompson plan in these discussions, I would have to tell him that we did not agree with command arrangements proposed.

Hohler and Thompson ostensibly accepted all this with good grace and reiterated their desire to cooperate closely with US and by implication to play role of junior partner in this enterprise. I sense nevertheless that Thompson is thoroughly annoyed.

Another meeting is scheduled for next week at which we plan to go through Thompson Plan in detail with object of identifying points on which US and UK approaches diverge.

Nolting

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300. Editorial Note

On November 30, Chester Bowles drafted a memorandum to the President reporting on his recent 2-week visit to East and Southeast Asia, which included visits to Japan, Indonesia, and Malaya. As a result of the trip Bowles offered several conclusions regarding Vietnam:

"1. I believe General Taylor's estimate of the immediate danger in South Vietnam is valid. The government in Saigon is not only weak but confused. In its present form I seriously question whether it can create stability within its own borders regardless of our assistance.

"2. I assume that CIA and other related agencies have surveyed the possibilities of an alternative Vietnamese leadership; if not, I believe they should do so. Under present circumstances I can see little hope for internal stability except through the emergence of a vigorous new leader such as General Park in South Korea who might rally the indigenous anti-Communist forces behind a more effective military policy and intelligence effort solidly based on long overdue economic, political, and social reforms.

"3. In the meantime, I believe we are correct in delivering essential military equipment to the present government as long as it shows some willingness to face up to the need for improved performance.

"However, in my opinion, it would be a serious mistake to send in organized units of U.S. troops which like the French before Dien Bien Phu would almost certainly be bogged down in a frustrating and costly struggle of white outsiders against 'anti-colonial' guerillas.

"4. If the over-all situation in Southeast Asia as a whole absolutely requires direct military action, I believe that our pressure should be directed against the North Vietnamese government in Hanoi. Such pressure could be accompanied by an offer through the U.S.S.R. or India to cooperate in establishing a 'neutral and independent' Southeast Asia, including Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos with free elections in Vietnam within five to ten years provided the present Communist pressure against Vietnam is ended.

"Although such a development runs counter to our present stance, I believe it would be wholly in our long-range interest. It is no more possible over the long haul for the United States to maintain a military power position on a peninsula of Asia against the growing pressure of Communist China than it would have been for the Spanish to hold a military position in Florida in the face of the developing power of the U.S.A. A neutral belt supported by non-Communist Asians is our one best hope of containing China within her present borders.

"5. In the meantime I feel the CIA, the Pentagon, and State should be asked to prepare a fall back position to which we could withdraw if the situation in Vietnam should collapse before these or other moves become possible."

In the margin of the first page, Bowles wrote, "Decided to delay and expand." (Yale University, Bowles Papers, Box 297, Folder 0496 Kennedy) The expanded version of this paper is apparently a long memorandum Bowles sent to the President on April 4, 1962. (*Ibid.*)

301. Memorandum From the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Bundy) to the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) [1]

I–19406/61 *Washington, December 1, 1961.*

SUBJECT

Vietnam Command Arrangements

I have reviewed the JCS proposal,[2] approved in principle by you, during the week with Alexis Johnson, and with representatives of AID and CIA. Concurrently, Admiral Felt's 290301Z[3] has laid out his ideas on the charter. This memorandum sets forth the views and issues, with my recommendations.

1. *State View.* Alexis Johnson reported yesterday that Secretary Rusk accepted his, Alex's views, as follows:

a. That there should be no new title for the present, although the powers of Chief, MAAG, might well be extended in the economic and intelligence areas as needed, and to cover clearly the command of forces introduced on the existing policy basis.

b. That it was not essential that the officer selected have a 4-star rank.

c. That the co-equal status of the officer with the Ambassador was acceptable, but would need minor clarification for protocol purposes.

I said that you would surely disagree on a. and b. His argument was that appointment of a US "Commander" would amount to an irrevocable and 100% US commitment to saving South Vietnam. I disputed this, and said it would be no more than a slight addition in a situation where, in the eyes of the world, we were already overwhelmingly committed. I also said you regarded the 4-star rank as crucial to the positive impact of the change.

. . . . . .

3. *AID View.* The preliminary view (Frank Coffin) is that the key issue is control of the allocation of local currency generated by the commodity import program. This is now in the Ambassador, who

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OASD/ISA Files: FRC 64 A 2382, Vietnam 1961 092 Dec. Top Secret. Copies sent to Gilpatric, Lemnitzer, and Wheeler.

[2] Document 271.

[3] A copy of this telegram was attached to Bagley's memorandum of December 1 to Taylor, in which Bagley characterized CINCPAC's view of how the command should be set up in Vietnam as "your 'normal model' with an on-the-spot CINCPAC representative superimposed, but without the 'Korea model' responsibilities." (National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T–185–69)

also retains the final refereeing of any disputes between USOM and the military. These two do have a working agreement, under which all military-related projects (roads, telecommunications, village communications, police support) are subject to full coordination; disputes are said to have been minor in recent months (I have heard the contrary about earlier periods).

Coffin's view is that the present system should be maintained (which could be accomplished by substituting the word "Coordinate" for the words 'Supervise and direct . . . [4] Diplomatic Mission" in paragraph 5 e. of the JCS draft) or that the *whole* direction of USOM should pass to the military commander—that there was no happy middle ground. I think there is a strong case for the second action as we go along, but would be much influenced by Felt and McGarr's views. Again, Felt has not included the point in his draft of proposed powers.

4. *Summary.* The CIA and AID issues seem resolvable, although there should certainly be a high-level meeting of minds and fully coordinated instructions both giving the text and glossing it. However, the State view strikes at the heart of the whole proposal, and is not acceptable in my judgment. I recommend that you:

a. Take up the matter with Secretary Rusk (perhaps with a name in hand) to urge that the title "Commander" be used and that a 4-star appointment be made.

b. If State continues adamant, that a charter be dreamed up embodying the JCS text, modified to meet the CIA points and to the less forceful position vis-à-vis AID (a senior military officer still called a Chief, MAAG, could hardly take over more economic power), together with the more specific points of Admiral Felt's cable, as the best possible solution now obtainable.

WP Bundy

[4] Ellipsis in the source text.

302. Memorandum for the Record by the Public Affairs Officer in the Embassy in Vietnam (Anspacher) [1]

Saigon, December 1, 1961.

SUBJECT

Anti-U.S. Press Campaign, November 25–30, 1961

Pending a fuller study of this subject, it is worth noting here the more or less accepted version of how the campaign began, what form it took and the "official" reaction to it expressed by the Director General of Information to the PAO.

During a call on the PAO by Dang Duc Khoi presumably for this purpose, [2] Khoi explained the source of the press campaign as he had determined it: a fit of temper in the Nhu family arising from reports of NBC correspondent Jim Robinson's reaction to an interview with Madame Nhu. According to Khoi, Nhu issued direct orders to Tran Van Tho (DGI) to let loose a campaign against the U.S. press. This was reportedly executed without President Diem's knowledge; it was only after it was brought to his attention by Thuan and Tuyen that Nhu's role was revealed. Meanwhile, Dr. Tho had issued a directive to the Vietnamese press which went far beyond Nhu's instructions. Certainly there were references throughout the week's campaign to American reportage on Vietnam—particularly in the *New York Times*—but this appeared quite patently a "hook" on which to hang a much broader critique of U.S. policies and practices. Little bits of pieces of information gleaned from statements made here and in Washington about US/Vietnamese "negotiations" were interpreted with a heavy dollop of imagination as a means of leveling charges of "interference" and "conditional aid" against the United States.

Although as many as half a dozen newspapers joined in the fracas in the first few days, they all seemed to run out of steam early in the week beginning Monday, November 27 and their comments became either ridiculous and/or considerably less vitriolic. Part of this may have been due to a conversation between Dr. Tho and the PAO on Monday [2] (which Khoi had accurately predicted almost to the minute during his call).

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 335, Press July–December 1961. Confidential. Attached to a memorandum of December 1 to Nolting, in which Anspacher wrote that the recent press campaign was the first one in his experience that had taken on such proportions.

[2] This conversation, which took place on November 27, was described in Anspacher's memorandum of November 28 to Nolting attached to the source text, but not printed.

In a two-hour conversation, Dr. Tho said that he had discussed the *Thoi Bao* articles with the publisher whom he described as a "sincere man who accepts full responsibility" for the articles which were inspired by "tendentious" reportage and commentary in the American press in recent weeks. These articles have reportedly not only more than doubled the newspapers' sales but had inspired tracts by persons unknown, saying "Ami Go Home" which the GVN has picked up in Gia Dinh. Dr. Tho reminded us of his stand against freedom of the press and stated that here was proof of the correctness of this stand. If other newspapers continue to follow *Thoi Bao's* lead, elements of the population would be inflamed to continued anti-American actions, Tho predicted.

There followed further discussion in which we pointed out that the newspapers here had a right to criticize American reporting from Vietnam, but this should really not be a springboard for a massive condemnation of the American Government and people as "Capitalist-Imperialists." Dr. Tho then proposed that if the American Government could prevail upon the American press to "report correctly" about Vietnam that the GVN, through his office, would be able to "persuade" the Vietnamese press to desist in their present anti-American effort.

We made a thorough explanation of how U.S. press relations are conducted, pointing out the difficulties in preventing speculative stories. Tho noted that the State Department should be asked to call "erroneous reporting" to the attention of U.S. editors. We stated that wherever possible, this was done but that our government was not in a position to dictate what the press should print. I said, further, that because of the nature of the situation, we could not offer alternative true copy, in this case as in others.

One of the questions Tho asked was whether the legal principle "the right of response" was accepted in the U.S. so far as press reporting and commentary are concerned. This was a reference to the requirement by law in many countries that a newspaper most [*must*] provide equal space and equal prominence to counter-charges or at least to a defense against charges against an individual or a government—completely apart from the laws of libel. Of course, my response was in the negative, although I did point out that in this particular instance as in others, any newspaper which had published information thought to be "damaging" against the GVN, for example, would be happy to respond to an offer from the GVN Ambassador in Washington to grant an interview to the newspaper in which the GVN's position could be re-stated. However, there is no U.S. Government regulation of the press in America except for the law of libel and certain postal regulations. Dr. Tho smiled benignly at this and echoed his predecessor's sentiments that eventually the U.S.

would realize that complete press freedom without some form of government regulation simply gives free run to irresponsibility and in these times may lead to real danger in the national interests. I smiled benignly, too.

I don't think we got anywhere, really, except to "recognize" each other's problems. We could make no promises about the American press of course; we are walking on eggs as it is. However, we left the Director General with the assurances we would do what we could; but we were impressed also with his concern over what he had done in response to Brother Nhu's directive.

Under the circumstances, the only possible thing we could do in reaction to the press campaign itself is to consider it—apart from its source and the way in which it was conducted—a favorable sign of intellectual muscle-flexing on the part of newspaper editors which fundamentally is encouraging.

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303. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State[1]

Saigon, December 1, 1961—8 p.m.

748. Marathon discussion with Diem this evening (Dec. 1) started on negative note, but improved over course of four hours to a point from which I think we may find meeting of our essential interests. Thuan was present throughout, and he and I will work together tomorrow on GVN paper responding to our démarche of November 15. This will be subject, of course, to Diem's approval, but will be forwarded as soon as possible. We need a GVN paper for sake of clarity and precision.

Diem did not retreat much from his basic conviction that Vietnamese conflict must be won by non-Communist Vietnamese nationalists and that American influence in his government, if publicly known, would be disadvantageous. On other hand he expressed gratitude for President Kennedy's willingness to help, he realizes the reasons for our conditions, and I think we may find way to work

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/12–161. Top Secret; Niact; Limit Distribution. Repeated to Bangkok and CINCPAC for PolAd. Another copy of this telegram, which had been sent to the White House, was marked with the handwritten notation, "P[resident] has seen. Dec. 2." (Kennedy Library, National Security File, Vietnam Country Series) Printed also in *Declassified Documents, 1976*, p. 211A.

out practical steps which will make increasing aid effective. However, pending further report recommend nothing be made public other than that talks continuing. Atmosphere was good throughout, but Diem evidently smarting under what he regards as unjustified criticism of him, his family, and his regime in certain sections US press.

Nolting

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304. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, December 2, 1961—2 p.m.

749. Task Force VN. Reference: Deptel 704. [2] Following is evaluation short-range coup possibilities prepared by Mission Intelligence Committee:

Rumblings of discontent and expression of need for changes which had increasingly pervaded local political scene given additional fillip by Nhu's anti-American gambit in Vietnamese press. At present, however, no firm indications pointing to any group (categorized below) actively preparing as dynamic element in overthrow GVN.

Civilian opposition groups, within Viet-Nam and also including those active abroad, can be expected step up their activities to remind any group contemplating coup of their availability for participation in future government. They are not believed have capability acting as dynamic element to overthrow government, and there no indications their plotting or forming firm alliances with more vigorous elements at this time.

Reformist group within government (including such figures as V.P. Tho, Thuan, Tuyen, Chau) can be expected maintain its pressure for greater efficiency, but to do so for time being at least within context of Diem's continuation in power.

The generals and senior military officers are clearly frustrated by combination of stepped-up enemy capabilities and presidential

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/12-261. Secret. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd, Phnom Penh, Bangkok, Vientiane, Paris, and London.

[2] In telegram 704, November 28, the Department of State noted recent reports from Vietnam regarding coup rumors and asked the Embassy for its evaluation of the possibility of a coup "at any time you note a set of conditions or reports which are particularly significant." (*Ibid.*, 751K.00/11-2861)

meddling in military affairs. To carry off coup, however, they would have to establish united front and insure that subordinate commanders would follow their lead. Both would require considerable conspiring of which we have no active indications at this time and would face major dilemma between desire for change and still strong personal prestige and authority of Diem.

Major area of our uncertainty is among field grade officers particularly of elite groups who as unit commanders could force senior officers' hand by mounting coup similar to November 1960. Our coverage political attitudes and possible plotting these groups is still inadequate but it known that their officer corps purged after November 60 and they particularly aware serious nature VC threat today. (We remaining alert to any information bearing on this subject but believe it would be highly dangerous mount special program of collection these attitudes which might provoke either action on their part or serious GVN reaction.)

Despite this current appraisal, it must be expected that discussions and rumors will continue and may well sharpen in minds of above groups and be translated into more precise plans.

Nolting

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305. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, December 3, 1961—9 p.m.

754. With further reference Embtel 748, [2] no progress Saturday, [3] because Thuan sick (flu) and said could not meet until Monday. I nevertheless had full talk with him at his home Sunday morning, which served clarify to some extent Diem's position as stated to me on Friday. On basis these two talks, I am putting on paper my understanding GVN position re our démarche. Thuan has agreed go over this paper with me Monday morning and seek get Diem's approval of it during course of day. Have strongly emphasized time

[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878, Box 309. Secret; Niact; Limit Distribution. Repeated to Bangkok and CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Document 303.

[3] December 2.

factor and hope to telegraph this paper soonest.[4] Believe it desirable I then fly to Washington to consult on next moves. If this approved think I should tell press here that I am returning at my own suggestion in order to give my government a full account of discussions which have taken place and, hopefully, to conclude arrangements on which we have been working with GVN.

As indication substance of Diem's position, based on discussions Friday, following is pertinent. When we got down to brass tacks, I asked Diem to say what he could and would do under two broad headings: measures to improve GVN *efficiency* (in all fields, including military) and measures to improve GVN *public image* at home and abroad (to gain more active and widespread public support).

On efficiency, Diem noted what he has done and what he plans to do, at same time stressing shortage of competent people and need to develop administrative skills. He agreed to reactivate National Internal Security Council, to have it meet regularly as "war cabinet", to create a secretariat for it, and to conduct government security business through it. Thuan said today that this step, in his judgment, is best way to organize national effort at top, to accomplish delegation of authority, and to bring about more efficient governmental action. Thuan said President expects to have NISC meet regularly twice a week. Diem also said that next week he would issue decree setting up Provincial Councils in all provinces which would have advisory and real powers vis-à-vis the province chiefs. These councils would be appointed in first instance, from people who had shown themselves to be "most active anti-communist patriots" regardless of party or occupation; idea was to have them eventually elected. Diem was at first very cool to offer of selected Americans to help in administrative organs, taking position that this would not work out in practice, that nationalistic Vietnamese would resent it and Viet Cong would capitalize on it, and especially that he could not afford to admit publicly that he had to call on Americans to help administer his national revolution. He was blunt here in stating, citing cases in which Americans got frustrated when things were not done "their way", causing resentment among Vietnamese. He said he would not wish to build up situation like that which resulted in anti-American blow-out in Taiwan some time ago. I made clear that we did not want to force any American advisors upon him, but that we needed assurance of strengthened GVN administration. What did he propose? He said he recognized that

[4] In telegram 756 from Saigon, December 4, Nolting transmitted to the Department of State the text of a memorandum of understanding cleared with Diem that morning for submission ad referendum to the U.S. Government. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/12-461)

certain Americans, on selective basis and on request, could help strengthen his government. Thuan confirmed this. I said this was exactly our idea. (This is something that can be worked out, I think, on an ad hoc and ad hominem basis, but not in any overall sense and not publicly.) On military command, especially on full and unimpeded authority to Field Command to plan and conduct field operations, Diem stated flatly and repeated several times that he had given his military command full authority, had made it clear over many months that he counted on Field Command to plan and conduct military operations with full authority and control of ARVN forces, that he had not interfered either in plans or in troop dispositions, but that he had been sadly disappointed in results. "They tell you", he said, "that I interfere to hide their own incompetence and lack of initiative." This was a blunt and apparently sincere statement of a most serious situation. It conflicts, of course, with many allegations from GVN military about Palace interference. In any case I asked Diem how I could recommend that the US invest more heavily in a military machine that was admittedly not effective in overall organization and operation, although, as he had said, individual units fight well. I said we had to have systematic planning and strong, competent overall military direction if we were to support effectively. Could an American, or Americans, help here? Diem would not answer directly, but said he recognized that GVN military establishment had to be "reorganized." When I came back to the point, Diem said he hoped General McGarr would help General Minh to fullest extent in his planning and would urge him to take the offensive, specifically a major offensive against Zone D. (General McGarr has, as reported, been doing just that for many months.) Thuan said later that part of difficulty in this regard is personal friction between General Minh and General Thanh, JGS Chief of Staff. On our requirement for coordination in planning and operations between ARVN commanders and US command of any US operational units (e.g., helicopter squadrons), Diem was clear and affirmative. In such cases, he recognized that there must be full cooperation in planning and operations and neither party would take an action or decision affecting the other without prior frank consultation. Summing up the discussion on the point of improving GVN efficiency, I said President Diem had stated certain things that held some promise of improvement, but that frankly I was still not in position satisfactorily to answer root question on mind of my government when it considering sending reenforcements to Viet-Nam—i.e., why is it that with forces now available, and with resources built up over seven years, GVN has not been able to mount a systematic and effective effort against an enemy estimated at 20,000 armed men? I thought inadequate governmental organiza-

tion was part of the answer, and I did not think sufficient remedial measures for this had yet been suggested by President Diem.

On improvement of public image, President's attitude was one of sincere regret, at times edging on anger, that he had been misunderstood and misrepresented, especially abroad. He spoke earnestly along familiar lines of the need to build in Viet-Nam the "infrastructure of democracy" (education, sense of civic responsibility, administrative skills, political toleration); that infrastructure comes before "superstructure" of democracy, which can only come at a later stage, though as rapidly as possible. Over and over, Diem stressed his view that key to wider public support for GVN and himself is ability of government to provide protection to its people, this to be followed by the steady building of "infrastructure of democracy." No amount of window dressing, he argued, could substitute for the hard measures of self-sacrifice required to win against the Viet-Cong. This is a battle for the "hearts and minds" of the people; their basic sentiments are anti-communist; they must be given protection from terror in order to demonstrate their true allegiance. On specific measures discussed, he agreed that he should "get to the people more", by more visits (he already travels frequently and widely) and by more frequent radio talks. Thuan said later that Diem had agreed to talk over the radio at least once a month. On broadening the base of his government, he was generally negative; said that taking in dissidents or fence sitters in any broad government reorganization would not do any good and miss the point. Specifically on taking in a labor leader, Diem said that Buu was at cross purposes with the other principal trade unionists, and that to take any one or all of them in would not be practical or feasible. On release of political prisoners, Diem said that there are two kinds: communists, most of whom have committed crimes, who are in "rehabilitation camps", and are released periodically; about 30 who were active in November Coup, for whom public trials are being prepared. In summary, on this subject, Diem stuck to his guns; took little interest in any suggestions about measures to improve his public image; gave every impression that, so far as his own country is concerned, he felt confident in his judgment as a political leader and did not evidence concern about opinion outside.

I stressed throughout our requirement for a closer and more effective partnership. His reply in essence was that he cannot share the responsibility of governing South Viet-Nam with the United States; but that within that principle he too wanted to establish a closer and more effective partnership. In probing for specifics, I found some willingness to have US advisors on a selective and agreed basis in intelligence (both civilian and milita[illegible] military planning and operations, in joint provincial surveys [illegible]wever

he insisted that these should be focused on intelligence and military aspects, not on political and social). Thuan said today that GVN prepared to organize surveys this month and that political and social matters could be inquired into, but this could not be advertised. Thuan also confirmed that the Border Ranger Force suggested by General Taylor could be organized and that sufficient ranger companies could be pried loose from static guard duty to form a force of from four to five thousand men.

I realize the above is not a clear picture. It is sent only as a raw report. I will attempt set down the essentials in a paper to be approved by Diem, with Thuan's assistance. I hope no decisions will be reached in Washington prior to this subsequent report. My own thinking, with full regard to the gravity of contemplated US moves, is that we can develop a base sufficiently solid to give positive results and to turn the tide here in our favor. While I think we can, on a case by case basis, work out arrangements for mutual cooperation and execution of a stepped-up effort, I do not think that the "public image" can be substantially improved unless and until the GVN begins to win the war against the Viet-Cong. I believe that the tide can be turned with the limited concessions which Diem is prepared to make now and others that we can obtain on piece meal basis. In sum, I believe that we should proceed with confidence.

Nolting

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306. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, December 4, 1961.

725. Embtels 754 [2] and 756. [3] While Diem has not gone as far as we would like in improving his public image and we will desire continue press specific matters in this field, we agree that text memo of understanding is sufficient basis upon which to move ahead. Therefore hope that you can arrange for prompt transmission of

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/12-461. Secret; Niact. Drafted by U. Alexis Johnson; cleared with Harriman, Rusk, and the President; and initialed by Johnson for Rusk. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd and Bangkok. The time of transmission is illegible on the source text.

[2] *Supra.*

[3] See footnote 4, *supra.*

Diem's letter to the President. Question public release exchange of letters not yet decided.

Subsequent message will give guidance on handling ICC questions raised Embtel 720[4] as well as guidelines defoliant program, concept on use of US minesweepers and number of B-26's under Jungle Jim program.

Believe it important that for moment you remain at your post for completion these initial steps in launching program. However, agree consultation desirable on USG mission organization for implementing program as well as how we can best keep pressing GVN on decisions and actions that will be required to maximize momentum and impact our joint effort. Will communicate further with you this regard.

Rusk

[4] Not printed.

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307. Letter From the Ambassador in Vietnam (Nolting) to President Diem[1]

Saigon, December 5, 1961.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: I am pleased to inform you that my government is prepared to proceed with the program we have discussed on the basis of the memorandum which Your Excellency approved on December 4. A copy of the memorandum is enclosed.

With regard to United States military personnel who arrive in the territory of the Republic of Viet-Nam pursuant to our understanding, I assume that they will, for the duration of their stay, be entitled to the same privileges and immunities accorded the members of the Military Assistance Advisory Group and that all equipment and material pertaining to the units in question will remain the property of the government of the United States. I would appreciate Your Excellency's confirmation of my understanding on these points since it should form part of our respective records in this matter.

[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878, POL US Foreign Policy Secret. Drafted by Toussaint.

Accept, Mr. President, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration. [2]

Enclosure

Memorandum of Understanding [3]

Saigon, December 4, 1961.

The purpose of this memorandum is to record the essential points which have been agreed in recent discussions between the GVN and the U.S.

1. The basic immediate objective is to enable the GVN to take and maintain the offensive against the Viet Cong. The basic long-range objective is to enable South Viet-Nam to develop its freely-chosen institutions in peace and security.

2. To accomplish this, an increased Vietnamese effort will be mounted. The fundamental responsibility of the GVN for the conduct of the war will not be impaired. A closer and more effective relationship will be established, however, between the GVN and the U.S.A.

3. With the above objectives in mind, the U.S. has indicated its readiness to participate in a sharply increased joint effort with the GVN. This will involve increases in forms of aid previously furnished and, in addition, fundamentally new steps in GVN–U.S. collaboration, namely, (a) the participation of U.S. uniformed personnel in operational missions with GVN forces, and (b) closer consultation with U.S. advisers, as agreed, in planning the conduct of the security effort.

4. Before taking such far-reaching steps, the U.S. has sought, and the GVN has given, assurances that the GVN will take measures to increase its efficiency and to increase its public support in Viet-Nam and abroad.

5. With regard to increasing its efficiency, the GVN is prepared to do the following:

a. *Reactivate and use the National Internal Security Council (NISC).* This involves semi-weekly meetings, the creation of a secretariat to formulate decisions and directives, and the use of the NISC as the mechanism for the transmission of directives to subordinate commands for the prosecution of the war.

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[2] The source text is not signed.

[3] Secret.

b. *Military command structure.* The GVN considers that a reorganization of the military command structure is necessary, and will consult with the U.S. on specific measures to this end.

c. *Intelligence.* . . .

d. *Joint surveys of provinces.* The GVN agrees to institute with the U.S. joint provincial surveys, it being understood that the surveys would be directed principally to military and intelligence matters. The surveys will be started immediately.

e. *Border Ranger force.* The GVN is prepared to release from other duties sufficient Ranger Companies to produce a border Ranger force of about 5,000 men; and to employ this force as a mobile striking force against infiltrators in the northwest.

f. *Military coordination.* The GVN agrees that there should be the closest coordination between GVN and U.S. commanders in operations involving U.S. military units. Specifically, it is understood that U.S. helicopter units and U.S. Air Force and U.S. Naval units would be under exclusive U.S. command and would be used only with the agreement of the U.S. commander. It is further understood that the GVN will not take decisions or actions involving joint operations without full prior consultation with the qualified U.S. agencies.

g. *Administration.* It is agreed that U.S. advisers will be accepted in certain GVN administrative organs in addition to the military, subject to the request of the GVN. It will be necessary to fulfill this understanding by mutual agreement and on a case by case basis, with due regard for the requirement for administrative support, the personality and discretion of the U.S. adviser, and his technical qualifications.

h. *Legislative measures.* Legislation has already been enacted giving the President of Viet-Nam broad emergency powers during the next two years. It is considered, therefore, that the President of Viet-Nam already has the constitutional authority to carry out the arrangements mentioned above.

6. With regard to winning public support at home and abroad, the GVN has already taken or has initiated a variety of actions, of which the following should be noted:

a. Creation of a national flood relief and rehabilitation organization.
b. Creation of provincial councils.
c. Institution of military training for women.
d. Investigation of speculators.
e. Proposals to reduce official salaries and entertainment.
f. Plans for improved military allowances and survivor benefits.
g. Creation of a National Economic Council.

7. The GVN will, in addition, take prompt measures of its own to :

a. give a broader sense of participation in the war effort to the people of South Viet-Nam.
b. develop more contacts between officials of the GVN and the people.
c. develop a more effective public information service.

d. bring non-Communist prisoners promptly to public trial.
e. develop and announce an amnesty policy for Viet Cong defectors.

8. While continuing vigorously to develop the infrastructure of democracy in Viet-Nam—in which the United States will do its utmost to help—the Government of Viet-Nam recognizes also the importance, in relation to its fight with international Communism, of developing at all levels its democratic institutions, and will take all practical and feasible steps to this end. While the determination of such steps rests of course with the GVN, the GVN will continue to consider suggestions of the U.S. Government in this regard in the spirit of the new partnership.

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308. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, December 5, 1961.

727. Deptel 725. [2] The President would like you to know that he believes you have "done a good job". He asks that if you consider it useful you inform President Diem that he appreciates the indications of Diem's cooperation which he regards as important to "both of us" and he hopes that President Diem will keep him informed of any thoughts he may have as our common effort goes forward. He is counting on the efforts of President Diem and all of his people.

Rusk

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[1] Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/12–561. Secret; Niact. For Ambassador Nolting. Drafted by Cottrell, cleared with the President, and initialed by Cottrell for Rusk. The time of transmission is illegible on the source text.

[2] Document 306.

309. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, December 5, 1961—2:07 p.m.

728. Embtel 760. [2] No objection your letter to Diem set forth reftel. Re publicizing letters you recall in Deptel 619 [3] we indicated Diem letter need not be verbatim copy of our suggested draft but should cover substantive points. Therefore we cannot tell what kind of reply we will get from Diem. It is possible that publicizing exchange of letters may not strike right note for world and public opinion. Therefore we reserving judgment until receipt Diem letter.

When you present proposed draft letter you should delete all working commencing "on our mutual concern" and ending "our two peoples can be rightly proud of them". Reason is that these several sentences contain too much reference to mutuality and international partnership which are not consonant with Diem's insistence on retaining responsibility for war against Viet Cong plus our own reluctance to bind ourselves this closely in view Saigon press campaign and other recent indications of Vietnamese reserve.

Rusk

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/12–561. Secret; Niact. Drafted by Cottrell, cleared with Harriman and with McGeorge Bundy (in substance), and signed by Cottrell for the Secretary. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd and Bangkok.

[2] Dated December 5 and received by the Department of State at 8:32 a.m. that day, it contained the revised text of President Kennedy's letter which Nolting said he planned to send to Diem on December 6 if the Department did not object. Nolting also said that he planned to raise with Diem the matter of Diem's reply to Kennedy. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/12–561) For the first draft of the President's letter, see Document 257.

[3] See footnote 2, *ibid.*

310. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam [1]

Washington, December 5, 1961—4:19 p.m.

729. Re Embtels 684 and 720. [2]

1. Concur that our present policy re Geneva Accords increasingly difficult to implement and should be further developed. Concur specifically that arrival USS *Core* with two helicopter companies will bring matter to a head. (Embtel 720).

2. We fear that using rotation argument as you suggest will again involve us in numbers game which frustrating, time-consuming and fruitless in present context. It will stretch accords to point where credibility of our legal theory and our good faith in advancing it may be cast into serious doubt. It would impress no one and would not redound to our credit, to suddenly raise "ceiling" from 888 to 3500 seven years after signing of Geneva Accords.

3. Instead, we consider SVN and we have a good, legally sound position which we can take publicly in response to questions and which would provide us with a firm political base for whatever actions we would later judge necessary including taking issue to UN. This position would be presented in first instance by GVN to ICC along following lines:

NVN is committing acts of aggression in flagrant violation of Geneva Accords, and GVN has consequently requested US for additional support in men and matériel. These measures are being taken as requirements of legitimate self-defense necessitated by North Vietnamese breaches of Accords. As soon as North Vietnamese end their aggressive acts and resume their observance of Geneva Accords, these measures of support can be terminated, GVN is asking ICC increase its frontier patrols.

4. We would then state in response to queries that "US has acceded to GVN's request for expanded aid in men and matériel and is determined to help SVN preserve its independence. This is sole objective of US. US will terminate these measures as soon as NVN ends its acts of aggression."

5. Ambassador Nolting authorized take up this matter with GVN and seek persuade it to clarify its position with ICC along these lines.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/11-1261. Secret; Niact. Drafted by Chapman (TF/VN) on November 28; redrafted by U. Alexis Johnson on December 4; cleared with Cottrell, Salans, Cleveland, Anderson, and Cross (all SEA), McConaughy, Cleveland (IO), and the Secretary. Repeated to ten posts.

[2] Telegram 684 is printed as Document 268. Telegram 720 is not printed.

6. Department will discuss with British, Canadians and Indians upon receipt word Nolting GVN concurs this course action.

Rusk

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311. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President [1]

Washington, December 6, 1961.

A final direct word from me on South Viet-Nam, as a member of your personal staff.

I do not believe that all the choppers and other gadgetry we can supply South Viet-Nam will buy time and render their resources effective if we do not get a first class man out there to replace McGarr. McGarr is an excellent officer, but he lacks the critical qualities to make this partnership move. At the moment the problem is tied up in a disagreement between State and Defense on the kind of structural command changes—if any—that are necessary. In my view the structural command changes are virtually irrelevant; what we need is a young Van Fleet. In addition, it is equally crucial that we free Ed Lansdale from his present assignment and get him out to the field in an appropriate position. He is a unique national asset in the Saigon setting; and I cannot believe that anything he may be able to do in his present assignment could match his value in Southeast Asia. On this matter you may have to have a word with the Attorney General. [2]

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series, Secret.

[2] Rostow later wrote that President Kennedy decided not to appoint Lansdale as an adviser to Diem. The reasons, said Rostow, "lay deep in the American military and the civil bureaucracy. The American ambassador and the ranking general in Saigon—and the departments backstopping them in Washington—did not want another American that close to Diem." (Rostow's undated draft manuscript of a book, Chapter 34, p. 562, National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-15-71)

312. Letter From the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) to the Secretary of State [1]

Washington, December 7, 1961.

DEAR DEAN: I attach our proposed concept for elevating the status of the senior US military man in Vietnam to that of a "Commander, US Forces Vietnam". This draft reflects discussions with CIA and AID, and is a revision of an earlier draft. [2]

Essentially, I believe that if we are to give full impact to the increased efforts we are now making, and to take full advantage of the additional weight that the Nolting–Diem memorandum [3] gives us in the conduct of the counter-insurgency effort, we must signalize the change by such an elevation of the senior military man. The attached proposal would give him a status, under CINCPAC, comparable to that now held by the Taiwan Defense Command, by the US Commander in Japan, and by the Commander in Korea, who is of course also the UN Commander.

The attached draft would maintain the existing situation vis-à-vis AID activities, with the military role confined to the coordination of those AID activities that have a clear relationship to the counter-insurgency effort. I understand that full coordination now prevails for such activities as roads, telecommunications, and police support. We propose no change in this.

. . . . . .

The attached proposal envisages a relationship with the Ambassador that falls within the terms of the President's basic letter of May 29, 1961, [4] i.e., that an area "military commander" is not under the Ambassador's command, but retains his direct line of authority via the JCS to me and thence to the President. Obviously, political and basic policy matters must remain in Ambassador Nolting's hands. We must of course take every precaution so that neither Diem, nor anyone else, can play off the two senior US representatives against each other. But the military man should have his status enhanced if he is to move into a new and more active role, and should have complete access to Diem and all other top GVN officials on matters connected with the counter-insurgency effort, keeping the Ambassador fully advised. I need hardly say that in our nomina-

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5811/12–761. Top Secret.
[2] Not further identified.
[3] The enclosure to Document 307.
[4] See footnote 3, Document 271.

tion for the position we shall give weight to capacity to work cooperatively under such an arrangement.

I should like to get a resolution of this issue as soon as possible, and to have your views before I go to Honolulu direct from Paris.[5] I would anticipate that a new arrangement would require Presidential approval, which might be sought promptly upon my return from Honolulu.

Sincerely,

Bob

Attachment[6]

CONCEPT FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF A SUBORDINATE UNIFIED COMMAND, UNITED STATES FORCES, VIETNAM

General

1. Subject to agreement with the Government of Vietnam (GVN), as represented by letters which will be exchanged by President Kennedy and President Diem (copies of which will be made available), the United States will establish a subordinate unified command with Headquarters in Saigon.

2. The objective of this establishment will be to increase US military and economic assistance to the GVN, short of introduction of combat forces, and to increase US participation in the direction and control of Armed Forces of Vietnam (RVNAF) counter-insurgency operations, in order to assist the GVN to contain and eventually to eliminate the Viet Cong. To this end the command will draw together, under single command and control, all those US activities in Vietnam, including military intelligence operations and MAAG South Vietnam, which are related to the counter-insurgency effort.

3. The command title will be "United States Forces, Vietnam" (USFV); the commander's short title will be "COMUS Forces Vietnam."

Mission and Functional Responsibilities

4. The mission of COMUS Forces Vietnam will be to assist and support the Government of Vietnam in its efforts to prevent the fall

[5] McNamara was planning to attend the NATO Ministerial meeting in Paris.
[6] Top Secret

of Vietnam to communism, to defeat communist insurgency, and to destroy the Viet Cong.

5. The commander's responsibilities, in discharging the above mission under CINCPAC, will include but not be limited to the following:

a. Exercise operational command over all US military forces in Vietnam, including MAAG South Vietnam.

b. Plan and conduct all US ground, sea and air operations in Vietnam, including US efforts undertaken in support of RVNAF combat operations against the Viet Cong.

c. Exercise full control of all US military intelligence efforts in Vietnam.

. . . . . .

e. Participate with the RVNAF at all appropriate levels in intelligence activities, the development of plans, and the conduct of operations, to the extent necessary to insure the effective employment of RVNAF forces.

f. Coordinate, through the Chief of US Operations Mission, and other appropriate members of the US Diplomatic Mission, all US economic aid related to the counter-insurgency effort in Vietnam.

g. Function, on a direct and personal basis, as principal US military advisor to the GVN and as single US spokesman in Vietnam for US military matters.

h. Conduct planning, in coordination with PACOM agencies and other appropriate agencies, for the effective application and employment of US and GVN resources in execution of his mission. Such plans will be subject to approval by CINCPAC.

Command Arrangements and Relationships

5. [*sic*] USFV will be a subordinate unified command of PACOM with a joint staff; COMUS Forces Vietnam will report directly to CINCPAC. USFV will be comprised of US forces organized into Army, Naval and Air Force Service components and assigned for the accomplishment of the mission.

6. *Relationship with CINCPAC:*

a. COMUS Forces Vietnam will coordinate all relevant activities with CINCPAC, who has over-all responsibility for the Pacific area, including Southeast Asia. As directed by CINCPAC, COMUS Forces Vietnam will communicate and coordinate directly with subordinate agencies of PACOM in areas adjacent to Vietnam.

b. CINCPAC will be responsible to provide logistic and communications support to meet USFV requirements. Requirements which exceed CINCPAC resources will be referred promptly to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In addition, and when directed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CINCPAC will make available necessary staff and forces, including air and naval forces operating in direct support, for the execution of the COMUS Forces Vietnam mission.

7. Relationship with the US Ambassador, Vietnam:

The status of COMUS Forces Vietnam will be co-equal with that of the Ambassador. In this connection reference is made to a letter from the President to all Ambassadors, dated 29 May 1961, which is pertinent to this relationship (copy attached as Annex hereto).[7]

[7] Not found as an attachment, but see footnote 4 above.

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313. Telegram From the Embassy in India to the Department of State[1]

New Delhi, December 7, 1961—6 p.m.

1631. Thach arriving today sees Desai today and Prime Minister tomorrow. I shall not see him except by accident at Desai's house should latter think it especially useful. I braced Desai to make following points:

(1) The best way to stop any American military involvement in South Vietnam is to call off operations;
(2) We want peace in the area;
(3) We have no ambitions in North Vietnam and no intention of supporting GVN on any ambitions there. Desai will make sufficiently clear that latter has hands sufficiently full at present;
(4) Our desire for peace presumes no willingness to have a Communist take-over;
(5) Appointment of Harriman whose reputation, position and firm judgment are so well known is manifest of future course of policy.

Desai and I had a general exchange which brought out little that was new. He asked how I would feel if they would proclaim a 5-year standstill in the area calling off the infiltration and subversion and using the period to let tensions cool. I said this sounded all right. I gather he will make some such suggestion for what it might be worth. He noted that a total stand-down in Hanoi would not solve all problems, helpful as it might be. I said we were under few illustrations.

Galbraith

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/12-761. Confidential; Priority. Repeated to Saigon. Received in the Department at 3:32 a.m.

314. Telegram From the President's Military Representative (Taylor) to the President, at Palm Beach [1]

Washington, December 7, 1961—4:50 p.m.

CAP 5416–61. Eyes only for the President. Based upon a study of the Status Reports of December 5th, [2] I would say that implementation actions taken under the approved Vietnam program are moving forward well. The following points seem worth calling to your attention.

a. The *Core*, and two freighters, carrying the two helicopter companies, a total of 44 helicopters, have been directed to proceed to Saigon. [3] *Core* has an expected date of arrival of December 8th or 9th, and the two freighters will follow about 4 days later. The off-loading of this equipment will receive wide public attention and will make clear the fact that we are embarking upon a major program of reinforcement in South Vietnam.

b. Except for actions to provide an emergency delivery of about 100,000 tons of rice, there is insufficient evidence of progress in the economic field. The approved recommendations included a review of economic programs in Vietnam to assure that top priority was being given to those actions relating most directly to the counter-insurgency campaign. I have requested additional information from State.

c. The U.S. military personnel present or authorized for South Vietnam now amount to 3,679, broken down as follows:

(1) MAAG—1905
(2) Military units to be stationed in South Vietnam—1774.

d. A number of decisions remain to be taken which are now being worked on by the responsible departments and agencies. They include the following:

(1) Will ChiNat Special Force personnel be introduced into South Vietnam for the purpose of assisting in training of the Civil Defense Force? Diem desires to obtain from 3,000 to 5,000 trainers for this purpose.

(2) What changes should be instituted in the U.S. military command in Saigon? Assuming a new military commander is to be introduced, who should he be, and what should his relations be to the Ambassador and to the senior representative of CIA?

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-629-71. Top Secret; Priority. The President was staying at his father's residence after addressing the delegates to the National Convention of the AFL–CIO in Miami earlier in the day.

[2] Not printed. (Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series)

[3] An unsigned handwritten note addressed to Bromley Smith, dated December 5, indicates that "State gave Defense go-ahead on *Core* to proceed to Saigon based on Cottrell's talk with the President yesterday." (*Ibid.*)

(3) Is there a need for better organization of the business at the Washington end? At the present time State, Defense and CIA are forwarding three separate reports to the White House.[4] There is no agency short of the President with the responsibility and authority to scrutinize the interdepartmental actions taken and to direct corrective action when such is necessary.

[4] Not further identified.

315. Editorial Note

On December 8, the Department of State announced that it had released a two-part report entitled *A Threat to the Peace: North Viet-Nam's Effort to Conquer South Viet-Nam*, which had been referred to informally within the government as the Jorden Report. A transcript of the Secretary of State's news conference that day, at which he issued a statement regarding the release of the report and responded to questions about Vietnam, is in Department of State *Bulletin*, December 25, 1961, pages 1053–1059.

Part I of the report consisted of an introduction and the following eight chapters:

I. The Background
II. The Setting (South Viet-Nam)
III. The Pattern of Viet Cong Activity in the South
IV. Direction of the Viet Cong by North Viet-Nam
V. The Viet Cong Organization in North and South Viet-Nam
VI. Evidence of External Guidance and Support of the Viet Cong
VII. The Present Danger
VIII. Conclusions

Part II consisted of photographs and documents referred to in Part I.

Assistant Secretary of State W. Averell Harriman held four separate meetings on December 7 with representatives of the Vietnamese, Australian, French, British, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippine, Thai, Indian, and Canadian Embassies in Washington to present them copies of the publication and brief them on its contents. A composite memorandum of these four conversations, drafted by C. Benjamin Wood, is in Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/12–761. Harriman also met separately with British Ambassador David Ormsby Gore that day. Harriman's memorandum of the conversation as it related to Vietnam reads:

"I gave the British Ambassador copies of the Viet-Nam White Paper. After a discussion of it, the Ambassador raised the subject of whether the Soviet Government as a co-chairman should be called upon to use its influence to end the aggressive actions to the North Vietnamese. He said his government felt that to approach them now might be considered a sign of weakness, and that it might be more effective if done after some progress had been made in putting down the guerrillas or after an important victory was won.

"I replied that I understood this question was still under discussion. The argument for doing it now was that it might be some time before the situation improved. Obviously, if the approach was made now, it must be vigorous. It should include an expression of firm determination to prevent South Viet-Nam's being taken over by force and to warn the Soviets not to permit escalation. He said he expected the matter would come up in discussions between Lord Home and the Secretary in Paris. He mentioned also the activities of the Thompson group, expressing the hope that they would achieve the objectives of assisting Viet-Nam without interfering with MAAG. I told him that we were anxious that the Thompson mission should continue and believed that such minor differences that occurred could be straightened out in Saigon.

"I emphasized our determination to support Viet-Nam and that the dispatch of combat forces was not excluded. He indicated that the British Government agreed it was wise to make sure the North Vietnamese understood this." (*Ibid.*, 751K.00/12–961)

316. Memorandum of a Conversation, Quai d'Orsay, Paris, December 11, 1961, 10:30 a.m.[1]

US/MC/6

PARTICIPANTS

French
M. Couve de Murville
Ambassador Alphand
M. de Carbonnel
M. Lucet
M. Laloy
M. Soutou
M. de Beaumarchais
M. Manac'h
M. Froment-Meurice

United States
The Secretary
Ambassador Gavin
Mr. Bohlen
Mr. Kohler
Mr. McNaughton
Mr. Lyon
Mr. Hillenbrand
Mr. Brown

United Kingdom
Lord Home
Sir Shuckburgh
Sir Rumbold
Mr. Ledwidge
Mr. Samuel
Mr. Butler

SUBJECT

Vietnam

The Secretary said that the talks with Diem had led to considerable agreement and that additional steps are being taken to deal with the guerilla problem: improving intelligence, regrouping forces, improving civilian and military channels so as to improve action capability. We are providing additional economic and military support. Our objective is to help Vietnam do the job itself. We do not have in mind for the present sending organized units of American ground forces. We will supply aircraft and helicopters with American pilots. So far as the Geneva Accords are concerned, we want to concentrate on continuing violations from the North. We do not believe we are in violation because the relevant provisions have been suspended by the actions taken by North Vietnam.

Lord Home said that he agreed that Diem must be helped to fight and that he should be able to clean up the bad areas. The UK is concerned about the Geneva Accords. He hoped the US Government would not announce publicly that it is not bound by the

[1] Source: Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 65 D 366, CF 2000. Secret. Drafted by Brown. There is no indication on the source text that it was approved by the Secretary. Rusk was in Paris to attend the NATO Ministerial meetings.

Geneva settlement. It would render the British co-Chairman position difficult and might have an adverse effect in Laos. . .

The Secretary said that we have tried to avoid statements on the Geneva Accords. If questions are asked it would seem preferable to turn the question around to inquire into what the North is doing. If, in time, the other side comes into compliance, then we can cease extraordinary assistance. We can leave the Accords and Under Secretary Smith's statement [2] where they are. The purpose of the White Paper was to reveal North Vietnam activities and to prove to the Indians and others that it is not simply a question of civil disturbance.

. . . . . .

[2] For Under Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith's statement at Geneva on July 21, 1954, see *Foreign Relations*, 1952–1954, vol. xvi, p. 1500.

317. Telegram From the Department of State to the Delegation to the NATO Ministerial Meeting, at Paris [1]

Washington, December 12, 1961—6:57 p.m.

Tosec 32. Following is draft of suggested reply to Secretary McNamara's letter to you of December 7 [2] on command relationships in Viet-Nam. Draft has been discussed with Bundy in Defense and General Taylor, and has approval of Department. If you concur, suggest it be transmitted to McNamara prior to his departure for Honolulu. (Assume McNamara has available there copy of his 7 December letter to you.)

"Following are my comments on your proposed concept for elevating the status of the senior US military man in Viet-Nam as outlined in your letter of December 7.

"I completely agree with you that we must take full advantage of the new undertakings by the Government of South Viet-Nam in order to produce a return consonant with the effort we are making there. In doing this, we must carefully avoid any appearance of 'taking over' or stressing the 'big partner' relationship with the

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/12–1261. Top Secret. Drafted by U. Alexis Johnson, cleared with Cottrell, Wallace C. Magathan, and Harriman, and initialed by Johnson for Acting Secretary Ball.

[2] Document 312.

Government of Viet-Nam. We should also exhibit scrupulous regard for Vietnamese national pride and avoid, insofar as possible, giving the Communists any grounds for casting the United States in the role of Viet-Nam's former French masters, or of picturing the GVN as a puppet regime of the United States.

"Finally, I believe we must keep in mind the special nature of the effort to suppress the Viet Cong. While the threat continues to grow, it essentially retains the features of a guerrilla war. Viet-Nam may be a combat theater, but it is not yet such a theater in the conventional sense of the term. As you know, there are no present plans to send US combat troops to Viet-Nam.

"The immediate object of both sides is the loyalty of the populace. The role of the RVNAF is to seek out and destroy the Communist partisans, but, without the support of the people and the resources of the hinterland, the RVNAF would have little chance of accomplishing its mission. Also, if the GVN were to fail to marshal its resources effectively, no amount of American aid alone could save the day. Clearly, in this all-embracing conflict, virtually every activity of the GVN and the Country Team is 'related to the counter-insurgency effort.'

"Accordingly, I believe we should design a command arrangement which recognizes a predominantly advisory and supporting role of the American military to the RVNAF—a role which acknowledges the dual politico-military nature of the counter-insurgency effort, which accommodates Vietnamese nationalist sensibilities and which clearly continues to lodge local authority and responsibility for basic US policy with the Ambassador.

"I also believe that the situation in Viet-Nam differs not only from that of the normal and usual MAAG contemplated in the President's basic letter of May 29, 1961,[3] but also from that of an 'area military commander' who exercises command authority with respect to an 'area' extending beyond the borders of a single country.

"At the same time, American military assistance to the RVNAF is a separable element of the over-all American program of assistance to the GVN in suppressing the Communist guerrillas. On the military level and in conformity with basic policy, the senior American military officer should be free to make appropriate arrangements for lateral contacts with RVNAF, to plan military operations and to make decisions. This system proved its validity in Greece and I believe we would be well advised to adhere to it now. I agree with you that, regardless of the care exercised by the senior American

[3] See footnote 5, Document 271

officials, the GVN would seek to exploit a system of divided authority. We should present the GVN with no such temptation.

"Although the senior US military officer in South Viet-Nam will have certain US forces under his operational command, at this stage of the conflict his major role would be that of a staff officer, of [*a*] RVNAF military adviser and planner. Should the character of the conflict change and should the US assume responsibility for the conduct of the campaign, as in Korea, his function could be changed very quickly.

"I suggest that it may be possible best to reflect the foregoing situation by converting the MAAG into a 'military assistance command' with a joint staff and Service components, the commander's title to be 'Commander, US Military Assistance Command, Viet-Nam'. Another alternative might be to retain the title of Chief of MAAG for the senior military representative in Viet-Nam by giving him the concurrent title of 'Commander, US Forces, Viet-Nam'. In any event, I consider it important to retain the concept of 'military assistance' and avoid any implication that the US is assuming full responsibility for and direction of all of the military effort in Viet-Nam.

"I agree with you that, whatever title and command arrangement is eventually adopted, Ambassador Nolting should retain responsibility for political and basic over-all policy matters. While the senior US military representative should have responsibility for the conduct of military operations, training, and other clearly military matters, with, of course, direct communication to CINCPAC on such matters and economic aid related thereto, in view of the dual nature of the conflict, I believe it important that he receive guidance from the Ambassador on all other matters. In cases of differences of view, both representatives would, of course, be free to communicate such differences to Washington for decision in accordance with already existing procedures. I would expect that, in accordance with arrangements worked out with the Ambassador, the senior US military representative would directly furnish advice to the GVN, including President Diem, on all matters relative to security and maintaining internal security in South Viet-Nam and to the organization and employment of the RVNAF, keeping the Ambassador appropriately informed of his actions.

"I will look forward to discussing this question further with you in the light of the results of your visit to CINCPAC with the view of promptly recommending to the President decisions that will enable us more effectively and vigorously to pursue our objectives with respect to Viet-Nam".

Ball

318. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, December 13, 1961—7 p.m.

801. Deputy Under Secretary Johnson from Nolting. Thanks for your 760, [2] which I have studied closely.

Regret to say I have most serious concerns with what is apparently proposed as it applies to complex problem of Viet-Nam. The Communist insurgency in Viet-Nam is as you know, carried on by political, psychological, economic, guerrilla, and military means under political direction at every stage and level. This is the essence of the new Communist subversive warfare. Our counter-insurgency effort must, in my judgment, be equally well-balanced and flexible otherwise we are likely either to lose the fight or to throw this country into another Korean-type war. Under present conditions, by setting up an area military command here, I think we will not only risk poor coordination, but we will almost inevitably build into our effort a disproportionate emphasis, in resources and planning as well as appearance, on a military solution to the problem of Viet Cong insurgency in Viet-Nam. I am profoundly convinced that the problem cannot be solved on a military basis (although military force is an indispensable element), and I think my military colleagues here agree with this, as do all members of our task force.

My second point is related to the above. US efforts vis-à-vis the GVN over many months have been in the direction of encouraging and aiding them to take the offensive against the Viet Cong in many fields, not alone in the military. The GVN itself has been inclined to put too much emphasis upon military measures relative to civil measures. The establishment of a US area military command here would, I am afraid, encourage this tendency.

Broadly speaking, my view is that there should continue to be a unified all-agency effort in this country (i.e. the task force concept) supported and directed on a day to day basis by an all-agency directorate in Washington. I believe a way can be found within this framework to preserve a clear-cut military chain of command over US operational units presently planned for Viet-Nam without estab-

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/12–1361. Top Secret; Priority; Eyes Only. Repeated to Paris eyes only for the Secretary.

[2] Telegram 760, December 10, summarized the contents of McNamara's letter of December 7 to Rusk and the attached proposal and commented that the Department of State was inclined to accept the substance of the proposal as an important recognition of the increased scale of the U.S. military effort but that publicly the new commander should continue to be known as Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group. The telegram asked for Nolting's comments and suggestions. (*Ibid.*, 751K.00/12–1061)

lishing a military command structure which would throw the total effort out of balance. Standby plans for military operations and command should be made for instant use in the event of escalation or a change in the nature of the present war.

I am sure I do not need to add that my strong convictions expressed above are based on what I consider to be the compelling interests of the United States in this matter, and are not dictated by considerations of a personal or jurisdictional nature.[3]

Nolting

[3] In telegram 772 to Saigon eyes only for Nolting, December 13, Johnson replied that prior to receiving Nolting's telegram, the Department had already transmitted to Secretary Rusk in Paris a draft letter to McNamara (see *supra*) which Johnson thought met Nolting's concerns and which in any event left the decisions open until after the Secretary of Defense conference in Honolulu. Johnson said that at the Honolulu conference Nolting should feel free to express his own views even if they differed from those in the letter. He also noted that decisions on this matter would be made only after Nolting returned to Washington for consultation early in 1961. (*Ibid.*, 751K.00/2-1361)

319. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom[1]

Washington, December 13, 1961—7:52 p.m.

3228. DeptOff (Harriman) Dec 11 discussed current Viet-Nam situation separately with British and Australian Ambassadors. Major point emphasized to both mission chiefs was that US believes concerted international non-military assistance to Diem Government rather than sole US support highly desirable and hopes other governments can be persuaded make meaningful contributions. Harriman suggested possibility assistance might be coordinated through existing organization such as Colombo Plan if we found bilateral dealings resulted in overlapping activity. While guardedly receptive idea of concerted help to Viet-Nam, both Ambassadors non-committal re specific means coordination. Both undertook discuss with home governments.

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/12-1361. Confidential. Drafted by Robert S. Lindquist (FE), cleared with Wood, Harriman, and SPA, and initialed by Harriman for the Acting Secretary. Repeated to Canberra, Vientiane, Phnom Penh, Saigon, Paris for the Secretary of State, and Geneva.

British Ambassador concerned that US help to Diem not ignore Geneva Accords since subsequent North Vietnamese compliance with Accords might then undermine position of US and others helping Diem. Harriman revealed that in contemplated exchange of notes between Diem and President, latter would make point that new measures no longer necessary if North Viet-Nam adhered to Accords. Harriman stressed necessity Russians and Chinese be aware Western determination prevent Viet Cong victory but at same time allay suspicions, especially Chinese, re ultimate US intentions.

Returning discussion concerted assistance, Harriman noted possible provision Philippine medical team, Malayan guerrilla instruction, Thompson Mission, etc., either undertaken or under consideration. Suggested other types help might include flood relief. Stressed importance encourage other Asian support. British Ambassador said British playing down Thompson Mission since Thompson "sold as Tunku's man." Added Tunku aware danger posed in South Viet-Nam but suggested direct participation Malayan personnel perhaps not politically possible for Tunku. Ormsby-Gore said British opposed GRC participation. Re aid to Diem, British have thought in bilateral rather than multilateral terms.

Ball

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320. Letter From the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson) to the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Bundy)[1]

Washington, December 13, 1961.

DEAR BILL: I appreciate the difficulties you outlined in your letter of December 7[2] in providing expedited training and equipping of the Civil Guard and the Self Defense Corps. I can also appreciate why the employment of GRC special forces might provide a possible solution, from a strictly technical point of view.

On the other hand, this solution raises certain difficult problems.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5/12-761. Secret. Drafted by Cottrell and Johnson.

[2] Not printed. (*Ibid.*)

1. In most free countries the prospect of ChiNats fighting on the mainland of Asia raises the specter of opening a "Pandora's Box".

2. As you know, quite apart from whether Chinese are Communists or Nationalists, prejudice against them is strong throughout Southeast Asia, including Viet-Nam, even though the GVN is apparently receptive to accepting some of them in the present emergency.

3. One of our objectives in Viet-Nam is to assist the Vietnamese to counter successfully the Communist-directed insurgency without attracting substantial ChiCom intervention. The introduction of ChiNats would certainly in some degree increase this hazard.

For the above reasons, I believe we should not introduce ChiNat forces into Viet-Nam at this time but should continue to explore other alternatives.

For instance, I believe we should closely examine whether interpreters are indispensable. Experience in the police training programs in Viet-Nam, which may be similar to the individual and small unit training required for the Self Defense Corps, indicates that interpreters are not indispensable.

Additionally, we might examine the possibilities of getting experts from Malaya, the Philippines or Thailand, who are experienced in this work.

Another possibility might be to obtain a more precise estimate of the nature and extent of the training required through the results of our provincial survey teams, which are about to commence their investigations. We may find that training and equipping the Self Defense Corps should be done progressively in areas which become "white", closely following an integrated plan of clearing areas, setting up Civil Guard units and ARVN back-up for quick reaction when the Self Defense Corps gives the alarm. An immediate nationwide on-the-spot training in white, pink, or red areas may invite serious trouble for the program.

Our relative success in Laos with Mobile Training Teams suggests the idea of traveling teams to train, advise, and equip rather than "on-the-spot" training by a large number of trainers scattered thinly in villages, vulnerable to VC attack.

The above thoughts are offered as possible alternatives which I believe should be explored before we consider utilizing GRC forces. Of course, if Chinese Communist forces are introduced into Viet-Nam this would substantially change the situation.

Sincerely,

Alex [1]

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[1] Printed from a copy that bears this stamped signature.

321. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Saigon [1]

Washington, December 14, 1961—8:02 p.m.

781. Joint State–Defense message. Task Force/VN. Subject: Defoliants. Defense prepared give go-ahead to first stage defoliant operations upon receipt from CINCPAC of plans and Washington approval for first stage of operation. Decision is that first operations undertaken will be clearance of jungle growth along roads and trails used by ARVN for tactical operations. SecDef has stated that he desires these operations commence as soon as plans receive Washington (Defense and State) approval.

In anticipation press inquiries re use defoliant for jungle road clearance, we propose reply following lines: Noting Communist guerrillas use roadside underbrush to ambush civilian buses, trucks, and passenger cars, making roads unsafe for daily travel by people of the country, GVN has asked U.S. for assistance in program of clearance of jungle growth along roads of Vietnam. U.S. equipment will be used. Road clearance will aid the ARVN in patrolling roads to protect people and will facilitate normal maintenance. Operation involves use of materials which are similar those used every day for weed clearance rights of way in the United States. As our people know from experience, these defoliants of the 2-4D variety are not harmful to humans, animals, or the soil. Since there are miles of jungle roads in Vietnam, U.S. planes and personnel are actively cooperating in this jungle growth clearance operation. C–123 type planes are being used. They are piloted by U.S. crews in uniform.

Your comments requested on above proposed statement which we suggest would also be used in Saigon by U.S. agencies in response to expected queries there.

Deptel 556 [2] and Airgram CA-623 [3] propose certain procedures for GVN. We would suggest that matter of informing South Vietnamese people be responsibility of the GVN.

Since defoliant is harmless to personnel and animals, we intend to play it in a low key although we feel it will make a definite

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/12-1461 Secret; Priority. Drafted by Heinz and Wood; cleared with Cottrell, DOD/ISA, and USIA, and initialed by Harriman for the Acting Secretary. Also sent to CINCPAC for PolAd.

[2] Not found.

[3] Dated December 8; it contained the Vietnam Task Force's suggestions regarding publicity in connection with the use of defoliants. (Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/12-861)

contribution to counter-guerrilla operations. (on lines para A, 1 CA–623)[4]

We believe it important to emphasize that in this operation we are merely clearing jungle growth along the sides of roads, that we are not attacking any human targets, and that its primary purpose is to prevent the guerrilla forces from utilizing this jungle cover for ambushing Vietnamese forces.

We also anticipate that the ground work laid in connection with this jungle road clearance operation will establish a framework within which we can combat future Communist propaganda blasts for other phases of defoliant operations, i.e., tactical Zone D, border clearance and eventually food denial.

Ball

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[4] This paragraph dealt with defoliation along roads. It reads "Action preceded by low key, provincial level announcement emphasizing this normal procedure keep road shoulders clear underbrush and tying action to road maintenance effort. Mimeographed announcement including statement that spray harmless to man, animals, and soil for distribution inhabited areas near roads. Before undertaking overall road clearance project large-scale trial run should be undertaken, after proper publicity, and popular reaction to trial run assessed."

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322. Editorial Note

On December 15, the White House released the texts of a letter from President Diem to President Kennedy, dated December 7, and a reply by President Kennedy, dated December 14. The text of Diem's letter was substantially the same as the draft contained in Document 297. In his letter, President Kennedy said that the American people were "deeply disturbed by the assault" on South Vietnam and were prepared to help "protect its people and to preserve its independence." Kennedy also told Diem:

"We shall promptly increase our assistance to your defense effort as well as help relieve the destruction of the floods which you describe. I have already given the orders to get these programs underway."

For full texts of this correspondence, see Department of State *Bulletin*, January 1, 1962, pages 13–14.

323. Letter From the Chargé in Vietnam (Trueheart) to the Director of the Vietnam Task Force (Cottrell) [1]

Saigon, December 15, 1961.

DEAR COTT: I am enclosing a copy of a proposed letter from President Diem to President Kennedy.[2] During a long meeting yesterday,[3] the President mentioned to the Ambassador that he was planning to send such a letter in response to President Kennedy's message on the occasion of Vietnamese National Day.[4] Fritz indicated interest and Diem offered to send him a copy. The enclosure arrived this morning with a covering note stating that Diem planned to send the letter "soon".

Fritz did not have a chance to do anything about this prior to his departure for Honolulu. Accordingly, when I saw Thuan on another matter this afternoon, I took it on myself to mention the letter and to say with appropriate expressions of difference that I felt bound to let him know as a friend and on a strictly personal basis that I thought such a letter would be badly received in Washington. Thuan had obviously not seen or heard of the letter and expressed considerable interest in it. (It is of course patently a Nhu production.) I gave him a brief sketch of the contents, mentioning particularly the references to the Civil Guard and to American domestic politics.[5] I said that, whatever might be the validity of the statements regarding the Civil Guard, I thought they would not be understood in Washington at a time when we had embarked on a

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878, 320 GVN-U.S. Secret Official-Informal.

[2] Not found attached to the source text, but a copy of the proposed letter is in Department of State, Vietnam Working Group Files: Lot 66 D 193, Cambodia, Oct–Dec 1961. The copy bears several marginal notations including, "This is message Thuan gave Trueheart, but which was never officially sent—and never will be, we hope."

[3] A nine-page memorandum of the conversation Nolting and McGarr had with Diem from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on December 14, which was called by Diem to explain "his new concept of the danger facing South Vietnam," is attached to McGarr's memorandum of December 18 to Nolting. (Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878, Internal Security 1961)

[4] For text of this letter, dated October 24 and released by the White House on October 26, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, John F. Kennedy, 1961*, pp. 680–681.

[5] Apparently a reference to Diem's contention in his letter that the Eisenhower administration's failure to understand properly the "phenomenon of modern underdevelopment" led to a reduced role for the Civil Guard and his expression of gratitude to "the new Democratic Administration for having better evaluated the mission of the Civil Guard and for permitting it to be trained at present by MAAG." Diem also stated that the "chief reason for the long continued American refusal to convert the Civil Guard into a real guerilla army is a certain opinion to the effect that I entertained a sinister plan to create a personal army with the American money."

greatly increased effort to assist the GVN. The reference to alleged policy differences between the Republican and Democratic administrations was also not likely to be helpful to the GVN, in my opinion. Finally, I repeated that I had no wish to undermine my usefulness in Viet-Nam, but I felt obliged as a friend to indicate what I thought might be the Washington reaction to such a communication. Thuan appeared to take this very well and gave me a most friendly pat on the back as I departed. Whether he will be able to do anything about the letter is another matter.

Best personal regards.

Sincerely yours,

William C. Trueheart *

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* Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature

326. Editorial Note

On December 16, a conference called by the Secretary of Defense to discuss Vietnam was held at the headquarters of the Commander in Chief, Pacific, at Camp H.M. Smith, Honolulu, Hawaii. The principal participants in the meeting were Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara; Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs William P. Bundy; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Lyman Lemnitzer; Commander in Chief, Pacific, Admiral H.D. Felt; Ambassador Frederick E. Nolting; and Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam General Lionel C. McGarr.

The agenda for the conference included the following items: (1) Review of Viet Cong operations since October 1, 1961, and forecast of their probable moves during the next 90 days and the next 180 days; (2) Description of SVN operations against the Viet Cong since October 1 and statement of the plan of operations for the next 90 days and the next 180 days; whether the position of the Viet Cong had on balance become stronger or weaker since October 1; what the forecast was for the next 90 and the next 180 days; (3) The major SVN weaknesses and what must be corrected if the Viet Cong were to be defeated; (4) The status of plans to achieve United States objectives in South Vietnam, including CINCPAC's concept of the campaign plan for defeating the Viet Cong and the prospects for the development of a GVN overall plan; (5) Command relationships in the event United States Forces (USFV) were established; (6) The number of United States and GVN troops required to ensure the achievement of the established objectives; (7) Implementation of changes within the RVNAF agreed to by President Diem; and (8) A series of specific military measures, including provision to the RVNAF of additional helicopters, the improvement of air-ground support capability, and surveillance and control of costal waters and inland waterways. Copies of the list of the participants and the agenda, with progress to date and actions required on each agenda item, are in Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 68 A 5159, SGN (62) 19-GVN-DEFSEC-CINCPAC.

A restricted group of participants met at 8 a.m. to discuss procedures for conducting the conference and to approve the agenda. During this discussion it was decided to remove item 5 from the agenda. The meeting was then opened to a larger group of officers from the staffs present. The conference adjourned at 6:15 p.m. A 54-page summary record of the conference and the decisions reached

was attached to a memorandum of December 18 from Felt to McNamara. (*Ibid.*) A 10-page memorandum for the record, prepared by Admiral Heinz, dated December 20 and designated I–19504/61, also recorded the highlights and the actions required as a result of the decisions by the Secretary of Defense during the conference. A copy of Heinz's memorandum is *ibid.*, RG 330, OASD/ISA Files: FRC 64 A 2382, Vietnam 1961 092 Dec. For shorter, less formal accounts of the discussion at the conference, see *infra* and Document 326.

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325. Memorandum From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's Special Assistant (Parker) to the Chairman (Lemnitzer) [1]

Washington, December 18, 1961.

The following are selected items of interest discussed at the Honolulu meeting. They are arranged in chronological order and generally follow the agenda [2] item by item.

1. SecDef announced intention to have such a meeting each month for the next three months, possibly in Hawaii but probably farther West.

2. Secretary of Defense outlined mission of his visit as:

a. What can we do to improve the situation.
b. What do our people in the field need.
c. We have great authority from the President.
d. Money is no object.
e. The one restriction is what combat troops will not be introduced.

3. It was the general consensus agreed to by SecDef that there is not likely to be any gimmick which will win the war for us. While air and naval action contribute it's mainly the ground force problem.

4. After considerable discussion all hands seemed to have come around to General Lemnitzer's view that we needed teams of 5 or 6 advisors down to and including battalion level.

5. Doubt was cast on the wisdom of mounting the campaign to clear out Zone D. The plan was considered highly sophisticated for a

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Lemnitzer Papers, L–1141–71. Secret. Attached to the source text are 10 pages of handwritten notes on the discussion at the Honolulu meeting. The drafter of the notes may have been Parker, but this is not indicated on the source text.

[2] Regarding the agenda for the meeting, see *supra*.

first campaign, also it seemed to rest too heavily on the success of defoliant operations. MAAG is to re-study the plan and determine an alternate.

6. After discussion of the pros and cons of Diem, SecDef pointed out that we are stuck with him and must make the best of it; we cannot expect to change him much; what we must do is present him with specifics and get his agreement on them rather than on broad general plans.

7. We have to train at the same time and on an expedited schedule enough regular forces to make sweeps of areas, and enough para-military forces to then hold them.

8. When we speak of reorganization of the Vietnamese forces we are speaking basically of two aspects:

a. Taking the Air Force and Navy into the JCS setup to further the team spirit all down the line.

b. Give authority to field commanders. Diem says he has done this, the field commanders say he has not.

9. After considerable discussion on use of Jungle Jim, General Lemnitzer cleared up all doubts by saying that they could use for many missions they wished in South Vietnam by putting one Vietnamese aboard.

10. The Vietnamese navy capability border, coastal and inland waterway and particularly the latter is better than we thought back here.

11. The training program for the civil guard and Self-Defense Corps extends to 1963. SecDef thinks this is a crucial problem that we can't wait until 1963 and that we must find some other solution.

12. SecDef gave approval on the spot for certain program to improve communications.

13. SecDef approved going ahead with three construction projects.

14. While Diem has agreed to making 5,000 rangers available for border patrol the implementation slow. General Lemnitzer pointed out that implementation should start on the Laos-Vietnam border leaving Cambodia border to the end.

15. SecDef refused to discuss Laos indicating that Government decisions had been taken there and there was nothing further we could do for the moment. In Vietnam however there are many things we can and must do quickly.

T.W. Parker[1]
Major General, USA
Spec. Asst. to the Chairman

[1] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

326. Letter From the Political Adviser (Martin) of the Commander in Chief, Pacific, to the Director of the Vietnam Task Force (Cottrell) [1]

Honolulu, December 18, 1961.

DEAR COT: By the time you receive this letter you will probably have received information on the Secretary of Defense conference here last Saturday [2] from one or more of the participants from Washington, e.g., Bill Bundy, Joe Wellings, "Pickles" Heinz. If you can get a copy of the agenda which was prepared at this headquarters, and of the record of the conference prepared here, [3] you will have a thorough coverage of the topics discussed, decisions made, and actions to be taken. In your capacity as Director of Task Force–Viet Nam I would think it important for you to have access to these documents.

The purpose of this letter is to sort out what seemed to me significant aspects of the conference from the policy viewpoint. First I might say that thanks to a great deal of hard and careful work by Admiral Felt and members of his staff the conference moved along rapidly, covering a great deal of ground during the nine hours of meetings. As far as I know Washington and Saigon participants, as well as those of us here, feel that the conference was well worthwhile; it produced not only greater mutual understanding of the problems facing us in South Viet Nam but also a number of important decisions by the Secretary of Defense.

The Secretary and General Lemnitzer brought a sense of immediacy to the conference, emphasizing they wanted concrete actions that would begin to show results in 30 days. They were not interested in projects to be completed in 1963. The Secretary at the outset stressed that the primary effort of the U.S. military establishment was behind South Viet Nam and that we could have practically anything we wanted short of combat troops. In closing the conference he said our job was to win in South Viet Nam, and if we weren't winning to tell him what was needed to win. The Secretary was interested in specifics such as the number and types of personnel, kinds and amounts of equipment, the costs and specific plans to accomplish specific objectives. The Secretary clearly had little faith in gimmicks such as defoliants. He was leary of overemphasizing naval and air actions, although he recognized their importance as

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/12-1961. Top Secret; Official-Informal.

[2] December 16.

[3] See Document 324.

supporting elements. He warned against the danger of sitting in Washington and checking off lists of junks, aircraft delivered, etc., figuring we were winning the war by this process.

During the course of a discussion on how to get Diem to follow U.S. advice Ambassador Nolting observed that we are unlikely to get Diem to carry out his recent commitments to us to the degree or as rapidly as we would expect or like. There would be no automatic fruition of these agreements from the Vietnamese side. This is something we had to live with. The Secretary commented that Diem was the only man we had, that he had some basis for being suspicious because of all the coup talk, and that if we concentrated on fundamental military specifics he thought we could get Diem to cooperate. We had to work with him; we couldn't expect to change people. He felt that while reforms were necessary, they take a long time and we need some specific action within the next 30 days. Ambassador Nolting agreed with the "specifics approach", saying that we couldn't remodel the overall structure of the GVN or change characters.

The Secretary evinced strong interest in building up the Civil Guard and self-defense corps. He reasoned that past experience has shown that after the ARVN sweeps through an area the Viet Cong filters back in and there is nothing to show for it. He guaranteed the money and equipment to strengthen the Civil Guard provided a specific plan was worked out. He suggested as a starter, taking one province, doubling or tripling the Civil Guard as necessary, sweeping the province with the ARVN and consolidating control with the Civil Guard. The Secretary did not object to increasing the ARVN ceiling above 200,000 provided good justification could be furnished him, but he raised the question whether the resources couldn't better be used to increase the Civil Guard. He tended to brush aside Ambassador Nolting's worries about raising the necessary piastres to meet the costs of expanding force levels. [4]

One subject on the agenda but not discussed in the meetings was command relationships in the event U.S. forces Viet Nam (USFV) were established. However, Ambassador Nolting discussed this subject with Admiral Felt and Secretary McNamara separately, indicating his lack of agreement with the JCS–CINCPAC concept. In general his thinking coincided with that contained in the draft message from Ball to Rusk, [5] a copy of which Joe Wellings had brought with him. Nolting feels that the eradication of the Viet Cong is not simply a military problem but one involving economic,

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[4] This sentence is underlined on the source text, apparently by Cottrell, and an exclamation point is written in the margin.

[5] See Document 317.

psychological, political and social actions. Although in the next six months the military might need an overriding priority, if ultimate success is to be obtained, there must be a parallel action in these other fields. We must beef them up as we are now beefing up the military. He also feels that creation of a USFV command would encourage the GVN in its present tendency to overemphasize military action and regard it as a cure-all. He fears, too, that it would tempt the GVN to play off the commander USFV and the Ambassador against each other. He therefore wants to stick to a task force concept. As far as I am aware this is the only agenda subject upon which there was a significant divergence of views between the Ambassador and the military side.

There were three more subjects of broad policy interest which I will just mention briefly: 1) U.S. transport aircraft such as the C–123's and the helicopter companies are being sent to SVN for combat support activities, not for "taxi service." 2) No seabee or Army Engineer battalions are to be used in SVN for construction projects since use of U.S. combat troops for their protection is ruled out at this time; use civilian contractors instead. 3) U.S. manned ships or boats are not to be used in SVN inland waters despite the apparent offer in paragraph 1(c) Deptel 619 to Saigon.[6] Ambassador Nolting will have to try to straighten this out with Diem.

The foregoing is, of course, highly restricted information. Moreover, it is frankly a subjective interpretation of what is important. I hope you can see the "agenda" and the "record" for a complete fill in.

With every good wish for you and your family for the coming year.[7]

Sincerely,

Ed

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[6] See footnote 2, Document 257.

[7] Written in the top margin of the first page by Cottrell was the following draft reply: "Dear Ed: Many thanks for your letter of Dec. 18. I've seen the 'record' made up here, but not the agenda. Mele Kolekekoma. Cot. P.S. I drafted the Ball–Rusk telegram." No copy of Cottrell's reply as actually sent has been found.

327. Memorandum From the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) to the Secretary of State [1]

Washington, December 18, 1961.

This will confirm our discussion of this morning [2] in which we agreed that:

1. The Senior U.S. Military Commander in South Vietnam will have the direct responsibility for all U.S. military operations in that country, and the authority to discuss both the U.S. and Vietnamese operations directly with Diem and the leaders of his government.

2. The Senior U.S. Military Commander will have the title "Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Forces—Vietnam".

3. The Senior U.S. Military Commander will have direct access to CINCPAC and through him to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense on all military matters.

4. The U.S. Ambassador in Vietnam will be responsible for political and basic policy matters.

5. The two U.S. representatives will keep each other informed of the operations within their respective spheres.

Robert S. McNamara

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[1] Source: Department of State, Vietnam Working Group Files: Lot 66 D 193, 3–C Military Assistance—General Oct–Dec. 1961. Secret. A note on the source text indicates that a copy was sent to William Bundy. Printed also in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 11, p. 426. That version, the text of which is identical to the source text, indicates that copies were sent to Nitze and Gilpatric in addition to William Bundy.

[2] Presumably either a reference to a meeting at 11 a.m. attended by Rusk and McNamara as well as officials from other agencies to discuss the question of nuclear sharing with the British Government or a personal meeting between Rusk and McNamara at 12:11 p.m. (Johnson Library, Rusk Appointment Books) No other record of either of these meetings has been found.

328. Letter From the Secretary of State to the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) [1]

Washington, December 18, 1961.

DEAR BOB: There are two comments I should like to make on your memorandum of December 18 [2] about the military organization in Vietnam.

First, it was my recollection that you had agreed to the designation suggested in my letter, [3] namely, "Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command—Vietnam". The use of the term "forces" gives the impression of organized military units considerably beyond those we presently have in mind.

Second, in our talk today we did not get very far into the relationship between our Ambassador and the U.S. Military Commander. I agree with respect to the direct operational contact between the Commander and the Vietnamese officials, including President Diem. I also agree that the Ambassador and the Commander should keep each other fully informed. My own view of the relations between the two is covered in the next to the last paragraph of the letter I handed you in Paris.

Perhaps one of your colleagues could follow up on this with Averell Harriman in the event there are any dangling points which need attention. Even though they might be minor in the total context, there is great advantage in our having complete clarity in the interest of harmonious and efficient operations in the field.

Cordially yours,

Dean [4]

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5/12-1861. Secret. Drafted by Rusk and cleared with Harriman and U. Alexis Johnson.

[2] *Supra*.

[3] See Document 317.

[4] Printed from a copy that bears this stamped signature.

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329. Editorial Note

At the National Security Council meeting on December 19, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Lyman Lemnitzer briefly reported on the Secretary of Defense Conference at Honolu-

lu. According to minutes of the meeting, apparently prepared by the Vice President's military aide Howard Burris:

"Lemnitzer reported certain details of the meeting which he and Secretary McNamara had at Honolulu with Nolting, McGarr and Felt. He termed the meeting very successful. (He did not mention Secretary McNamara's principal statement at the meeting to the effect that the United States had made the decision to pursue the Viet Nam affair with vigor and that all reasonable amounts of resources could be placed at the disposal of the commanders in the area.)" (Johnson Library, Vice Presidential Security File, National Security Council II)

The President's log indicates that the National Security Council met from 4:10 to 5:10 p.m. (Kennedy Library, JFK Logs)

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330. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State [1]

Saigon, December 19, 1961—7 p.m.

819. Eyes only Secretary and Deputy Under Secretary Johnson from Nolting. Embtel 801.[2] Deptel 772.[3] I had opportunity in Honolulu last week-end to discuss with SecDef McNamara, Bundy, and Admiral Felt the question of US military organization and command for expanded US military support to SVN. Bundy showed me copy draft message from SecState to SecDef[4] commenting on latter's letter of December 7.[5] It may be useful to have my further views following these conversations.

I am more convinced than ever that, in circumstances existing now in VN, division of US authority and responsibility would be a grave error and would jeopardize accomplishment of US objectives. I agree in general with points made in draft message from SecState to SecDef, but I do not think that draft is precise enough in defining responsibilities and command and inter-agency relationships in Viet Nam.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/12-1961. Top Secret; Priority

[2] Document 318

[3] See footnote 3, *ibid.*

[4] See Document 317

[5] Document 312

In considering how best to organize, we should realize that our organizational arrangement will have a direct effect on: (a) What US does; (b) What GVN does; and (c) What the enemy does.

If we organize in manner proposed by Defense, we will, I think: (a) Put a disproportionate emphasis, in planning and allocation of US resources and manpower, on military means; (b) Encourage GVN to do likewise and thus neglect other measures essential to winning the allegiance of South Vietnamese people (there has always existed a strong tendency in GVN towards this error, e.g., recent demand for saturation bombing); (c) Play into hands of enemy, who is organized differently, for a different kind of war; or [(d)] Invite a military reaction from outside.

While I welcome vigorous planning and action by Defense in this situation, which was vividly demonstrated at recent Honolulu meeting, and regard more effective military measures as having highest priority in turning tide of VC insurgency, I do not believe that US organizational arrangements should, or need, be fundamentally changed to accommodate introduction of three to four thousand additional US military personnel. On the contrary, I think task force concept is still valid, needing only such modification as is required to satisfy sound requirement that US operational units shall have purely military chain of command. Vis-à-vis GVN, however, there should clearly be one US spokesman in VN, otherwise we shall get the run-around. This spokesman should be chairman and coordinator of US task force as at present, but should not, of course, interfere in command of US military forces.

Thus, I would envisage a top US military man here who would be a member of our task force; who would have two deputies (one for military assistance and advisory duties and the other for command of US operational forces). The top military man would be responsible for coordinating within the TF the military segment of the total US effort, and thereafter he would be responsible for carrying it out through one or the other of his two deputies. He would, of course, speak frequently with President Diem and other high GVN officials as at present, in discharge of the military elements of the US program. It should, however, be clearly understood that the chairman of the US task force, i.e., the Ambassador, has the responsibility and accompanying authority for the total US effort to sustain in Viet Nam.

If this were an active theater of warfare in the traditional sense, with US combat forces directly involved, the recommendation above would not be made. The fact that we have not put combat forces into this country, and intend to win without doing so, demonstrates to my mind that US relationships with GVN, and US organizational arrangements, should clearly correspond to our stated intention,

which is to help the GVN to mount effective countermeasures in all fields to the VC insurgency. This is still essentially a political job in the broadest sense, and should be organized and run as such.

As a corollary, I should like to add that, no matter what the command arrangements, the vigor of the Dept of Defense in this situation needs to be matched by equal vigor in the non-military aspects if the proper proportions are to be maintained in our total effort here.

Nolting

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331. Telegram From the Commander of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (McGarr) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Lemnitzer) [1]

Saigon, December 20, 1961.

SGN 901. My sensing on certain aspects 16 December conference are furnished for such use as you see fit. From my viewpoint, conference was helpful. Expect next meeting, which recommend be held Baguio, to be more productive for you and Secretary as hope MAAG will be permitted carry ball to greater degree on those items affecting problems and operations here. Am also hopeful be given more reasonable advance notice on agenda.

In addition other actions directed and suggested, we now reviewing plans for Zone D, and feel defoliant portion properly integrated into military portion of the plan, can be effective and am convinced ARVN will need all possible assistance. Would not favor its deletion as GVN and RVNAF inserted this in the basic plan given them "under the table" by MAAG. U.S. reluctance follow through on help promised at higher level could well have adverse psychological reactions.

As mentioned in letter today,[2] consider it unfortunate that reorganization and proposed changes in command structure here, plus expanded terms of reference, were not discussed at meeting. Was most gratified when learned this item on agenda and was

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[1] Source: National Defense University, Lemnitzer Papers: 1961 Eyes Only Messages. Secret; Eyes Only. Repeated to General Decker. A handwritten notation on the source text indicates that it was seen also by General Wheeler. No time of transmission is indicated on the source text.

[2] Not found.

appreciative of my superiors' recognition that "man on firing line" should be allowed to participate in these discussions. Regret that circumstances did not permit. This naturally of extreme importance to me both from operational and personal viewpoint.

Due greatly expanded mission here over and above normal MAAG type operation, have long recognized we doing job of small theatre headquarters with staff and authority for MAAG Mission alone. Therefore, have made number specific recommendations to CINCPAC over period of time which designed match resources and terms of references with actual duties and responsibilities. Meanwhile have accepted these additional duties, mainly by default, and attempting discharge to best of capability. This currently made additionally difficult by failure State get more than promise by Diem nor "much closer relationship than the present one of acting in an advisory capacity only."

On personal side, know you understand that particularly in dealing with orientals, my value could be depreciated should a Senior man be brought in to take over top spot. Such action could well react unfavorably on my present working relationship with GVN and RVNAF officials and adversely affect their present trust and confidence.

Regarding above, would appreciate any "straws in the wind" you feel able to give me and would naturally treat as personal and confidential.

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332. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State[1]

Saigon, December 21, 1961—7 p.m.

834. I saw Thuan yesterday (December 20) on many matters:

1. Honolulu meeting: reviewed with Thuan purpose and results this meeting, stressing US determination, vigorous planning and action under new partnership. Emphasized obvious fact that increased and accelerated US assistance imposes obligations and burdens on GVN as well as US task force to make effective use, and puts premium on GVN's undertakings and plans to increase efficiency and expedite action from top to bottom in all branches. I

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.00/12–2161. Secret; Priority. Repeated to CINCPAC for PolAd, Bangkok, Phnom Penh, and Vientiane.

reviewed in general major points covered in Honolulu meeting, saying that these would be taken up by General McGarr with Minister Thuan in more detail (McGarr has already begun this).[2]

I bore down on necessity including Viet-Nam Navy representative and Viet-Nam Air Force representative on Joint General Staff, as important element in achieving necessary GVN military coordination at top.

As agreed Honolulu meeting, I told Thuan we did not see necessity of, and had decided against, sending US uniformed personnel to man small boats for inland waterway patrol (a point which was subject to misinterpretation in US negotiating instructions.) He understands our position, but was disappointed; said this would require additional GVN naval personnel and training in handling US-furnished boats. I said I thought that, along with the boats, we would consider sympathetically any necessary increase in GVN naval personnel and training for them. He will send us a note with his specific ideas on this.

On joint provincial surveys, we agreed that Thuan would call first team together for final briefing this Saturday,[3] with view to having them in field next week. In this connection, US press stories (especially articles in two recent issues of *Time*), emphasizing "concessions" which US has, or should, extract from GVN in exchange for increased aid, came up. Thuan pointing out how difficult such stories make our joint effort for improvement in GVN organization and personnel, in view of sensitivities and national pride involved. I told him I agreed 100 per cent; that I deplored such stories; that they had not originated with us here; and that I had done everything that I could to prevent our recent discussions and agreements from being reflected in this manner. (*Comment:* I cannot overstress disservice which certain press stories and obvious leaks have done, and are doing, to our cause here.)

2. GVN-Cambodian relations: I left with Thuan for info (we will follow up with Foreign Office) a memo suggesting steps to achieve GVN-Cambodian border liaison along lines suggested Phnom Penh's 234.[4] Thuan seemed sympathetic to this approach.

3. I asked Thuan how new GVN organizational arrangements are working, especially National Internal Security Council. He said

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[2] Copies of McGarr's two memoranda of December 18 to Thuan, one entitled "Training of Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps" and the other "Civil Government Paramilitary Infrastructure (Organization) Required as Integrated Part of Military Phase of Pacification Effort," were attached to McGarr's memorandum of the same date to Nolting. (Washington National Records Center, RG 84, Saigon Embassy Files: FRC 66 A 878, Internal Security 1961)

[3] December 23.

[4] Not found.

NISC had met last week; next week they expected to start regular twice-weekly meetings, with agendas and with Secretariat headed by General "Little" Minh, who is already installed. I stressed importance of orderly and rapid decisions based on agenda items and passed to Secretariat for implementation action; only thus could we hope to keep pace with the many matters requiring rapid decisions and follow-through action.

4. Montagnards: Thuan reported that Montagnard population is "coming our way" in increasing numbers. This substantiated by other reports we have, and is encouraging.

5. VC strategy: Thuan, agreeing with President Diem switch to General McGarr and me last week,[3] said that evidence available to GVN (particularly recent VC officer prior testimony) led him to conclusion that VC trying to group in larger units, up to divisional strength, with military and that he expected major VC attacks to be mounted within a couple of months we agreed that this analysis, if correct, makes it all the more necessary that our forces move promptly to the offensive to disrupt and destroy VC ability to concentrate.

6. Border Ranger Force: I mentioned to Thuan my disappointment at inference in President Diem's last conversation with McGarr and me on this matter. I had asked him direct question of when 5,000-man Ranger Striking Force for Border Patrol would be organized in order, among other things, to use *our* helicopters. Thuan had replied somewhat evasively to two direct questions on this. Thuan said that this would be done as agreed; but that it would be great help if Chief MAAG could come up with a joint recommendation with ARVN field command on Ranger units which could best be spared from present duties. If [*He*] could then, he felt persuade Diem to release them. General McGarr is working on this. I made it clear to Thuan, and he understands that US cannot afford, in terms its own public opinion, to send to Viet-Nam supporting forces and material only to have them stand idle, waiting for GVN plans and actions. I was frank in telling him that such a situation would soon reflect itself in US press and no doubt in congressional questions; and that we counted heavily on GVN's recognition of this fact and accelerated vigorous action on their part.

Nolting

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[3] See footnote 3, Document 323.

333. Telegram From the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (McGarr) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Felt) [1]

Saigon, December 21, 1961—5:57 p.m.

210957Z. Acting on MAAG advice, Big Minh on 14 December briefed Diem on concept of employment of task forces as outlined in CINCPAC military campaign plan. [2] Minh reported Diem immediately became most suspicious and demanded to know why such task forces should operate directly under field command. Minh explained purpose was to assist Corps Commanders who are heavily involved in overall pacification their CTZ. Task force needed conduct specific operations against heavy Viet Cong concentrations. President emphatically disapproved.

Minh further reports this [*that*?] on several occasions following weekend, senior officers reported by Minh to be close to brother Nhu approached Minh and asked why he wanted task force—is it for purpose of a coup?

Minh also presented border control plan to Diem (which is basically MAAG plan as modified by field command) and was instructed to "hold off" as he now studying British border plan. (*Note:* This first mention of British border plan. Will check and report.) On 18 December, Minh discussed Zone D plan with Ty plus formation of previously reported "special battalions." Ty said ARVN was leaning toward formation of special companies instead.

As result, Minh states he feels like "officer without portfolio." He claims he is followed by armed agents. Further says his guards picked up two armed men lingering vicinity his house and check uncovered them as Secretary Thuan's "private detectives."

Source of above is Minh himself who as previously reported has at times appeared bitter and frustrated but report is considered serious as could well slow down progress on present plans. MAAG will continue to make every effort to ensure this does not occur. Will keep you advised.

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5/12-2161. Secret; Priority. Also identified as MAGGHGACH 4587 and repeated to the Joint Chiefs, JACE, AJCC at Fort Ritchie, State, and the White House. Received in the Department at 12:51 a.m., December 22. The source text is the Department of State copy.

[2] Not further identified.

334. Telegram From the President's Military Representative (Taylor) to the President, at Bermuda [1]

Washington, December 21, 1961—11:23 p.m.

CAP 5466-61. The weekly Vietnam status report [2] contains the following items of interest:

A. Ambassador Nolting intends to come to Washington in early January and, in the meantime, will follow up agreed items with Diem for early action in Saigon.

B. The following U.S. units will soon enter into active operations:

(1) Jungle Jim aircraft on combat missions with combined U.S.-GVN crews aboard as part of combat crew training requirements. The aircraft will bear SVN markings. [3]

(2) Two U.S. helicopter companies, which will be operational on 25 December and 5 January.

(3) U.S. Navy minesweepers to participate in coastal patrols independent of but supplementing the SVN Navy commencing on 22 December. U.S. ships will remain south of the seventeenth parallel and outside the three-mile territorial limits, passing information on, but not boarding, VC or DRV ships or junks.

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[1] Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Vietnam Country Series. Top Secret; Eyes Only. The President was in Bermuda where he was meeting with British Prime Minister Macmillan.

[2] Dated December 21, not printed. (*Ibid.*)

[3] In a memorandum of December 19 to Taylor, Bagley wrote that the Embassy in Saigon was being told to delay the start of Jungle Jim operations with US-GVN crews until December 22. In the meantime the Department of State, in transmitting the December 21 status report on Vietnam to the President, would inform him that the combined crew operations in Jungle Jim aircraft would begin soon. According to Bagley, "If there is no reaction from the White House, Saigon will be given an affirmative answer. Mr. Bundy is aware of this procedure which I gather is an agreed approach to avoid pinning down the President." (National Defense University, Taylor Papers, T-127-69)